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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7814th meeting
Thursday, 17 November 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Seck	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering the period from 12 August to 25 October 2016) (S/2016/950)

Special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2016/951)

Letter dated 15 November 2016 from the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2206 (2015) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/963)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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Special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2016/951)

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The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan; and Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of participants to document S/2016/950, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan, and document S/2016/951, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

I wish to also draw the attention of participants to document S/2016/963, which contains a letter dated 15 November 2016 from the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) addressed to the President of the Security Council.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Løj and Mr. Dieng. I will brief the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

I now give the floor to Ms. Løj.

Ms. Løj: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the developments in South Sudan since the release of the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/950). As members have the report before them, I will focus my comments on more recent updates, progress and challenges.

While the Transitional Government of National Unity that was reconstituted after the July crisis has taken steps to improve security in Juba, the overall security situation in South Sudan — in particular, in the greater Equatorias, in parts of Unity, and Western Bahr el-Ghazal — remains volatile. In the Equatorias, recurring attacks on passenger and commercial vehicles traveling along the main roads linking Juba to the country's southern borders have resulted in civilian casualties and disrupted the flow of much-needed commodities and supplies, including food, to Juba and other parts of the country. These attacks have also exacerbated ethnic tensions in the Equatorias, which have spread to other parts of the country — a subject upon which I am sure my colleague Mr. Dieng will elaborate on this following his recent visit. These targeted attacks, as well as sporadic clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and other armed groups in the Equatorias, have also resulted in additional displacement and inflicted further suffering upon the civilian population, with many fleeing to Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The greater Bahr el-Ghazal region has also witnessed an upsurge in violence involving the SPLA and armed groups, with serious incidents in and around Wau and Rajaf, seriously impacting civilians. Intercommunal confrontations among once-peaceful neighbouring ethnic groups have led to the displacement of a large number of civilians in the once-thriving city of Wau, including over 28,000 who are currently seeking safety in a protection area established adjacent to the base of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

In Unity, we are currently seeing significant mobilization and violent confrontations between opposition forces allied to Mr. Riek Machar and elements affiliated with First Vice-President Mr. Taban

Deng Gai, which have allied themselves with the SPLA. Fighting between the SPLA and pro-Machar opposition forces in late October resulted in an influx of hundreds of internally displaced persons (IDPS) to the UNMISS temporary operating base in Leer. The instability, as well as the looting and vandalism of humanitarian compounds, have also prompted humanitarian agencies to suspend operations in Leer, thereby creating yet another area of significant civilian protection and humanitarian concern.

The deterioration of the economy and the increasingly fragmented conflict — often with ethnic undertones — that we are seeing have placed the country on a potential downward slide towards greater divisiveness and risk of a full-scale civil conflict that could render national cohesion almost impossible to achieve. Much more needs to be done by the Transitional Government to put a stop to these security incidents, which contribute to an environment of instability and violence, lead to displacement and exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situation. The guns simply have to be silenced if the suffering of the people is not going to become even more dire.

We must also make greater efforts to stem the increasing number of localized conflicts, intolerant ethnic rhetoric and incitement to violence. That will require the involvement of local leaders, religious leaders and civil society representatives. The Mission is undertaking a number of actions to support and facilitate such nation-building activities.

Since the Security Council's visit to South Sudan in early September, the Mission has been engaging with the Transitional Government of National Unity at the political and technical working levels on the implementation of the commitments contained in the joint communiqué issued at the end of the visit. As far as the Regional Protection Force is concerned, on 16 November the Transitional Government of National Unity circulated a document to the members of the Security Council that gives the impression that an agreement has been reached between the Government, the Security Council and the United Nations on the provisions of resolution 2304 (2016) and that of the 4 September joint communiqué.

I would just like to clarify that on 16 November we had a meeting with the Government on the Regional Protection Force and the status of the implementation of the joint communiqué, but we only received a copy of the document after the meeting and on the same day it was submitted to the Security Council. Therefore, we have not had the opportunity to review its contents in detail. We are currently consulting internally and with Headquarters here in New York on the details before formally responding to the Government. In that regard, the mandate of UNMISS continues to be guided by resolution 2304 (2016) and, in line with it, the Mission will continue to report through the Secretary-General's 30- and 90-day reports to the Security Council.

As for the freedom of movement, the Government has agreed that UNMISS will inform the Government of patrols and movements but not await formal approval to conduct such movements. However, challenges continue to exist in implementing that in practice, since commanders on the ground are either not informed or are simply not willing to comply. However, we did manage to conduct two patrols to Yei in Central Equatoria last month following this procedure, thereby enabling the Mission to get first-hand knowledge of the dire situation in the area.

As for the bureaucratic procedures regarding clearances of the military contingents, equipment and so on, we have agreed with the Government on the modalities for a one-stop shop, but it remains to be implemented. We have also agreed with the Government that staff in the Mission will be issued with multiple entry visas, the issuing of which is expected to commence this week.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the dire humanitarian situation, which is worsening every day owing to the security situation and the deteriorating economy. We now estimate that 4.8 million people are severely food-insecure, and food insecurity has spread to the Equatorias as well as to the Bahr el-Ghazal region. Furthermore, because of the security situation and a lack of seeds, farmers in those food-producing areas are likely to miss the upcoming planting season. Our humanitarian colleagues are doing their utmost to reach people in need, but they continue to face obstacles in terms of movement, bureaucratic procedures and criminality.

Following the Security Council's visit, a humanitarian oversight committee has been established, made up of members of the Cabinet and security institutions as well as representatives of UNMISS and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The first meeting took place on 26 October,

and a number of recommendations were made with the aim of improving humanitarian access. However, we have yet to see if they will translate into tangible improvement for the humanitarian personnel on the ground.

As I prepare to leave South Sudan after more than two years as Head of the Mission, I would like to make two points. First, the difference between the success and failure of the peace agreement, and of peace in South Sudan generally, depends on the parties' commitment to pursuing its comprehensive and inclusive implementation, with the firm backing and support of regional and international partners. Secondly, I urge all involved, and especially the South Sudanese leaders, never to lose sight of the ultimate goal — a peaceful and prosperous future for the people of South Sudan.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Council for its support to me during my assignment in South Sudan. It has been an honour to serve the Organization and the people of South Sudan. As a parting appeal, I would like to ask that the Council not let South Sudan be pushed off the radar screen as other pressing global challenges demand its time. The people of South Sudan have suffered far too much and for far too long. The victims of the conflict still have hope and high expectations of the international community. As I often say, we must not let the boys and girls of South Sudan down, and we must put them at the forefront of all our decisions on South Sudan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Løj for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dieng.

Mr. Dieng: I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council on my visit to South Sudan last week. As the Council may know, I decided to go because of growing concern about recent developments there, including reports of violence targeting multiple ethnic groups that is taking place against the background of a breakdown in the political process and stalled implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The purpose of my visit was to assess the situation from the perspective of my mandate in order to better understand the landscape of ethnically fuelled violence, including hate speech and incitement to violence, and the risk that it could lead to further atrocity crimes, including genocide.

In the course of the week, I met with a variety of stakeholders, including religious leaders and community members. I also visited a protection-of-civilians site in Juba and travelled to the town of Yei in Yei River state to meet with members of the community and Government. Yei, which until recently had been spared the violence seen in other areas, has now been identified as a conflict hotspot, with escalating violence against multiple tribal groups in Yei and the State of Central Equatoria of which Yei River is a part. The perpetrators of the violence are varied and reportedly include the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO), unidentified armed groups, militias and bandits.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Special Representative Løj for the excellent support provided by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for my visit, and to express my appreciation to the Transitional Government of National Unity for facilitating the visit and for its cooperation while I was there. That said, however, as I reported last week, I was dismayed that what I saw and heard in South Sudan confirmed my concerns about the fact that there is a strong risk of violence escalating along ethnic lines, with the potential for genocide. I do not say that lightly. As the Secretary-General highlights in his report (S/2016/950), there are myriad underlying risk factors that in my assessment provide an environment ripe for the commission of mass atrocities.

First, in addition to the loss of life and trauma, the violence has an ever-increasing economic cost, both domestically and internationally. It is causing a drain on much-needed resources for development and humanitarian assistance. The Government is reportedly spending half of the national budget on security. There will be neither growth nor development in South Sudan if that continues. The economy has stagnated, inflation is very high and the population is increasingly desperate. The political and security crisis that resulted from the violence in July was fresh in the minds of those with whom I spoke, and many referred to the potential for a further deterioration of the security situation in the coming dry season, when movement around the country will be easier. Reports from the field indicate the existence of constant security incidents and the arming, recruitment and training of both the SPLA and SPLA-IO.

As the Security Council has noted, we have seen patterns of human-rights violations and abuses

committed mainly by SPLA soldiers, police officers and members of the National Security Service, as well as by SPLA-IO and militia groups. Those violations have not been addressed. There is widespread impunity and lack of accountability for violations, including those committed in the name of counter-insurgency. Civil society organizations have been directly targeted, as have human-rights defenders and journalists. Some have been killed, and many others have fled the country out of fear for their safety. Many people with whom I spoke referred to an amorphous and undisciplined army formed out of what had once been two opposing forces. They have now splintered into multiple armed groups, criminal gangs and bandits, over which the Government is failing to exercise control. Some of the groups are formed along ethnic lines and are pursuing their own objectives.

In speaking to people, I heard of tremendous mistrust between the civilian population and the military. The people no longer seem to view the military as their protectors but rather as an entity to be feared — or joined as one of the country's few potential employers. One elder I met summed up the current ethnic polarization, saying that he could see fear in the eyes of some and enthusiasm in the eyes of others.

There is a serious, protracted humanitarian crisis and widespread, prolonged displacement of populations, both internally and to neighbouring countries. In some cases, displacement has caused the disruption of agricultural activities and food insecurity. Despite that crisis, the Government and non-State armed groups continue to hinder access to the humanitarian and human rights community. While aid agencies continue to deliver assistance to people in need across the country, at times there is outright obstruction of the delivery of services and support to people in need.

The scarcity of resources has contributed to divisions within society. Instead of the development of a South Sudanese national identity, we are seeing the extreme polarization of some ethnic groups, which has increased in certain places since the outbreak of violence in July and the disintegration of the peace process. Some groups shared with me their feelings of betrayal, and a perception that the SPLA is increasingly ethnically homogenous, composed mostly of Dinka members, and has been ethnicized as part of a wider plan to launch systematic attacks against ethnic Nuer and multiple tribal groups which make up the Equatorias. At the same time, there were a number of incidents last month that specifically targeted Dinkas.

Inflammatory rhetoric, stereotyping and name-calling have been accompanied by threats, targeted killings and rape of members of particular ethnic groups, and by violent attacks against individuals or communities on the basis of their perceived political affiliation. Especially worrying was a statement issued by President Kiir on 19 October, in which he said he would personally lead military operations against the armed groups responsible for killings in the Equatorias.

I visited Yei River State, and I was shocked by what I found. Yei had previously been spared the violence seen elsewhere but did suffer the consequences of the violence in July, when the SPLA pursued Riek Machar and his supporters through the Equatorias into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recent reports detail the expulsion of farmers from their land into the city of Yei. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that 100,000 people were trapped in Yei at the end of September. Many farmers have lost their homes and belongings, livestock and land. Property has been looted and villages have been burned. I heard reports of targeted killings, assault, maiming, mutilation, rape, and the barbarous use of machetes to hack families to death.

When I visited, there was widespread fear among the people. One person told me in desperation, "Tonight I don't know what will happen to me". An elder expressed terror that his community would be finished. And Yei is just one location among many that are experiencing that kind of violence. Despite the challenges it faces, the United Nations system has been monitoring signs of increased conflict potential in other areas of Central Equatoria, as well as in Western and Eastern Equatoria, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Upper Nile, Unity, and Jonglei. However, there is much that we do not know.

The media, including social media, are being used to spread hatred and encourage ethnic polarization, and letters threatening particular ethnic groups, telling them to leave, face violence or be eliminated from specific areas, have surfaced in the past month. I am particularly worried by the involvement of the youth, who make up a large percentage of the population and who are particularly susceptible to divisions within society. I was also informed by a number of people that the South Sudanese diaspora has been playing

an influential, negative, role in spreading hatred and inciting violence.

There is a range of different perpetrators and victims, which makes an assessment of the risk of atrocity crimes in South Sudan more complex. But the warning signs are there. Throughout my visit, conversations with all actors confirmed that what began as a political conflict has transformed into what could become an outright ethnic war. With the stalling of the implementation of the peace agreement; the current, worsening, humanitarian crisis; a stagnating economy and the proliferation of arms, all of the ingredients exist for a dangerous escalation of violence. There is both motivation and the means.

I must emphasize that genocide is a process; it does not happen overnight. And because it is a process and one that takes time to prepare, it can be prevented. The political leadership of South Sudan has the primary responsibility of protecting its population and must be held to that responsibility. Action can and must be taken now to address some of the factors that could provide fertile ground for genocide.

My intention in delivering this briefing is to provide impetus for preventive action. We have a collective responsibility to protect the population of South Sudan from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Bearing that in mind, it is highly desirable that the Security Council consider the following options which, if implemented, could reduce the risk of atrocity crimes.

First, while I commend the Security Council for its strong condemnation of ethnically fuelled violence and hate speech, it should continue to insist on preventing further incitement to discrimination, hostility, and hatred that could lead to more violence. The Security Council should also publicly call for the political leadership of South Sudan to immediately condemn and take steps to prevent any act of discrimination, hostility, and hatred that could constitute incitement to violence. The Security Council must specifically request that UNMISS monitor, investigate and report on all incidents of hate speech and incitement to violence, and be provided full access by the Government of South Sudan to do so.

All support should be given to UNMISS to carry out all the Mission's mandated tasks, in particular, tasks that relate to the protection of civilians and human rights monitoring, which could contribute to preventing future violence. The Government should be pressed to ensure that freedom of movement is granted to all United Nations personnel, both civilian and military, to conduct patrols, investigate and report on incidents, and conduct community-based conflict prevention and resolution initiatives.

The Security Council might also consider requesting that the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) investigate and report on individuals, within the country and in the diaspora, who are inciting violence, have perpetrated targeted ethnic killings or are propagating hate speech. Given the current scenario, it is urgent that the Security Council impose an arms embargo. The proliferation of arms is devastating and could have an significant impact.

Similarly, the sanctions regime should not be limited to a few individuals; freezing assets and restricting offenders' movements should be imposed more widely. South Sudan's top officials have benefited both financially and politically from the war, and could not maintain the status quo without the free flow of funds and arms into the country. There is a known system of international banks, businesses, weapons traders, and intermediaries that has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict through their dealings, and the Security Council certainly has the power to bring its influence to bear on the situation.

The Security Council should also continue to stress the importance of an inclusive political process, accompanied by a cessation of hostilities. If some sectors of the population continue to feel excluded from participation, there is little incentive for them to pursue peace. Until the formal peace process is reinstated, there is much that can be done in terms of facilitating dialogue. What surfaced over and over in my discussions last week was the presence of long-standing anger, combined with misconceptions and preconceived notions. These need to be addressed if there is to be a change to peace.

All of the actors with whom I met stressed that there was an urgent need to engage in both community and national level dialogue and I was encouraged by their eagerness to engage in such processes. Community and religious leaders, provincial level authorities and UNMISS colleagues shared experiences of efforts to promote communication. Such efforts should be supported by the international community. Once there is greater stability and redoubling of efforts for

dialogue, I urge the establishment of the commission of truth, healing and reconciliation by the Government, foreseen in the peace agreement.

Beyond reconciliation, justice and accountability were common themes in my discussions with the people of South Sudan. Even as the conflict becomes more complex, the effects of the December 2013 outbreak of violence and subsequent violence linger, and human rights violations committed during the past few years have not been adequately documented or accounted for. I welcome the commitment of the signatories of the peace agreement to establishing a hybrid court to prosecute cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as other serious crimes under international law. It is my sincere hope that the Council's discussions with national authorities and with the African Union may move such plans forward. In the interim, I urge the Security Council to call for the establishment of an investigation mechanism that would collect and preserve evidence that could later provide evidence to national or international courts. That would help in assessing the full scale of violations and track patterns in violence.

Finally, while the State has the primary responsibility to protect its populations, other States, regional organizations and the international community can assist its protection efforts. Indeed, neighbouring countries have an intrinsic interest in doing so. The involvement of neighbouring countries in domestic conflicts with resulting spill-over beyond national borders has occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, to name a few. Regional action needs to be reinvigorated. African leaders must coalesce around a unified strategy to prevent an escalation of violence. Given the different regional interests and allegiances of the political leadership in South Sudan, any political strategy must be endorsed by all national actors if it is to succeed. The Security Council should strengthen its cooperation with the African Union Peace and Security Council and relevant actors within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in order to move that process forward.

Last week, I saw all the signs that ethnic hatred and the targeting of civilians could evolve into genocide if something is not done now to stop it. I urge the Security Council and member States of the region to unite and take action.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Dieng for his briefing.

I have the honour to present this briefing to the members of the Council in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. I will outline the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts (S/2016/963). I will speak briefly about the discussion that followed the presentation of the Panel of Experts' report by its Coordinator on 11 November and report on the activities carried out by the Committee and the Panel of Experts since my previous briefing (see S/PV.7628) in the Chamber on 19 February. In its progress report, the Panel of Experts analysesd the security situation, the political process and the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, which I shall briefly discuss.

With regard to the political situation and security conditions, the Panel of Experts found that they had seriously deteriorated and felt that an escalation of violence that would herald the dry season in November and December was expected. In paragraph 10 of its progress report, the Panel of Experts statesd that the principal factor driving the extension and expansion of the war in South Sudan was the belligerent attitude of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in Government, led by President Salva Kiir, on the one hand, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM-IO) in Opposition, led by Riek Machar, on the other.

As Special Adviser Dieng has just stated, the Panel of Experts underscoresd that the war in South Sudan is

> "increasingly characterized by the targeting of civilians on a tribal basis, given that it has evolved into what is widely perceived to be a zero-sum confrontation between the Dinka and non-Dinka tribes in many areas" (*S/2016/963, para.13*).

Incentives to violence, in the form of open letters, official statements or messages posted on social networks, have also multiplied, as illustrated by the Panel of Experts. The security situation has become increasingly unstable because of the economic situation. In that regard, the Panel of Experts statesd that the Transitional Government of National Unity had not yet demonstrated its commitment to sound economic governance practices.

A large section of the report of the Panel of Experts is devoted to the information it has gathered on the extension of the war, in particular, conflicts in the region of Equatoria, in which numerous cases of conflict-related sexual violence have been identified, as well as the destruction of villages, looting and killing of civilians including women, children and the elderly. Yei County, Equatoria, was particularly affected by the recent acts of violence. The Panel reported deliberate attacks on civilians, including extrajudicial executions, rape, kidnappings, forced recruitment, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture, beatings and harassment, intimidation and looting and the destruction of the livelihoods and assets of civilian populations. The Panel concludesd that atrocities and flagrant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law were being committed in Equatoria.

In its report, the Panel indicatesd that it had conducted several investigations, including one into the purchase of the L-39 jet, which was delivered after the formation of the Transitional Government in April as it sought to discharge its mandate to collect, review and analyse information concerning the supply, sale and transfer of arms and related materiel in the country.

With regard to the political situation, the Panel of Experts findsfound that it had deteriorated considerably, as the permanent ceasefire provided for in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan had not been respected by the parties following the clashes in July. The Panel also considered that the resumption of the clashes in July had undermined the meagre progress made in the implementation of the Agreement. The Panel identified only two cases where progress appeared to have been made in the establishment of institutions, namely, the establishment of the provisional National Legislative Assembly and the approval of cantonment sites in the regions of Equatoria and Bahr el-Ghazal, which have been challenged. In addition, the Panel of Experts identified acts being committed that were at cross-purposes with the security sector reform provided for in the Agreement. The SPLA had continued to accept new contingents and, representatives of SPLM/A in Opposition who had been appointed by Machar had been replaced by persons affiliated with Taban Deng Gai. According to the Panel of Experts, legislation and regulations adopted in 2016 include provisions that are not in line with international best practices as provided for in the Agreement. The Panel concluded that these measures had led to a stalemate in the reconciliation and political processes in South Sudan.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the Panel of Experts reported that there was an acceleration in mass displacements of people. On 16 September, when the Panel Coordinator submitted the Panel report on its activities over the previous 120 days, the number of refugees fleeing South Sudan had reached 1 million persons. When the Coordinator briefed the Committee on 11 November, he reported that in two months the number of refugees had increased by a further 250,000 people, with most of the refugees crossing the border in recent weeks fleeing Equatoria.

Some 4.8 million people, or one-third of the population living in South Sudan, faced severe food insecurity approaching famine levels in some areas. The Panel of Experts also outlined what it viewed as relentless obstruction of the efforts of the United Nations and humanitarian missions and attacks against them. The Panel reported that the most senior members of the SPLM/A in the Government consistently demonize the United Nations. The Panel gave examples of hostility towards the international presence in South Sudan through official statements and social media, which was confirmed by sustained and systematic violations of the status of forces agreement, with 19 violations in September alone. The situation for humanitarian workers in South Sudan was particularly serious, given that 67 of them had been killed since the beginning of the conflict in December 2013. Furthermore, three humanitarian workers were killed in a single week in October.

With regard to humanitarian access, 640 incidents were reported in the first nine months of 2016, and in September alone 81 incidents were reported, 59 of which involved violence against humanitarian personnel and the property of humanitarian agencies.

The Panel made three recommendations in its report.

First, it reiterated a recommendation from its January 2016 final report, in connection with its initial mandate, namely, that in order to achieving the Council's objective of an inclusive and sustainable peace in South Sudan, the Committee should designate the high-level decision makers who would be responsible for actions and policies that threaten the peace, security and stability of the country and who have the means, through their power and influence, to change the course of the

war. In this regard, the Panel recalled the confidential annex it had provided to the Committee in January, which included the names of these decision makers.

Similarly, the second recommendation in the Panel's report was a reiteration of a proposal that it had made twice during its initial mandate, namely, that the Council should impose a general arms embargo on South Sudan in order to prevent further destabilization of the security situation, and in particular the ongoing large-scale human rights violations. The Panel concluded that these violations were directly related to the fact that the supply of arms and ammunition to non-State actors and groups was done by all sides.

The Panel's third recommendation was aimed at promoting the national implementation of the sanctions measures taken against six individuals designated by the Committee in July 2015. In this regard, the Panel recommended reaching out to the banking regulatory authorities in several States in the region as well as issuing a press release encouraging State and commercial banks to implement asset freezes.

With regard to the examination of the Panel's findings and recommendations in the report, the ensuing discussion among members of the Committee was comprehensive and spirited. The Coordinator heard a wide variety of comments from members and answered many questions. The Committee's consideration of the proposed action in connection with the Panel's recommendations is ongoing, with special focus on the two recommendations specifically addressed to it.

I would also like to provide the Council with a brief overview of the Committee's work since 19 February, when I last briefed the Council (see S/PV.7628). On 14 March, the Committee and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict held joint informal consultations featuring a briefing by Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on the impact of the armed conflict on children in South Sudan. Citing the names of perpetrators from both sides, the Special Representative called upon the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan and its Panel of Experts to continue to investigate and examine the individual and command responsibility of all parties to the conflict for attacks committed against children.

On 15 July, members of the Committee were briefed by Coordinator of the Panel of Experts, whose mandate was extended by resolution 2290 (2016), in connection with the Panel's programme of work. On 16 September, the Committee was briefed by Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Ms. Bangura told the Committee that it was disturbing to report that the war in South Sudan continued to be waged on the bodies of women and girls. She reiterated that addressing sexual violence in conflict required national ownership, leadership and responsibility and that the authorities in South Sudan were not carrying out these three crucial functions in accordance with the letter and spirit of the commitments they had made. Ms. Bangura noted, inter alia, that, in the light of the continuous systematic patterns of sexual violence in South Sudan, and this in spite of the formal commitments undertaken by the parties, the Committee should consider activating targeted sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence and reiterated her Office's willingness to work with the Committee and the Panel in this regard.

Before concluding, I would like to remind delegations that I intend to travel to South Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Sudan from 10 and 19 December. While I had already visited South Sudan in early September as part of the Security Council mission, my trip in December is being undertaken with a view to implementing paragraph 11 of resolution 2290 (2016), by which the Security Council had emphasized the importance of regular consultations with concerned Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations, and in particular neighbouring States and States of the region, in order to ensure the full implementation of the measures and encourage the Committee to consider, as appropriate, visits to selected countries by the Chair and/or Committee members. I am hopeful that all four States will facilitate this visit by the Chair, which will be the first such visit to take place by the Chair of the 2206 (2015) Committee.

I now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Ms. Power (United States of America): Let me start by paying tribute to Special Representative Løj for her briefing, but above all for her more than two years of service in one of the most difficult Missions on the planet. We could tell, from our two trips to South Sudan — one at the beginning of her deployment and the other, recently, at the tail end of her deployment — just how much of herself she had invested in the Mission. We saw the kind of relationship she had with local South

Sudanese staff, many of them terrified by the events unfolding around them, the relationship she managed to have even through difficult times with Government and opposition actors and the respect that people in civil society had for her.

For me watching Special Representative Løj dodge bullets in July, stay to be with the people of South Sudan, open the United Nations gates with the support of the Secretary-General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and shelter local staff who feel that they have no place to go or sleep other than under their desks because they were so afraid was reflective of her bravery but also of her compassion for the people of that country. She will be missed by a lot of people.

I thank the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Dieng, for taking the trip that he took and for when he took it, his candour and the level of the detail in his briefing, as well as the knowledge that he brings from other contexts and history. I believe that it is chastening for us all. I thank Ambassador Seck for his leadership of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan and his dark briefing, which was in keeping with the general tenor here today.

South Sudan is a nation on the precipice. As Mr. Dieng said upon completing his visit to the country last week, there is "a strong risk of violence escalating along ethnic lines with the potential for genocide". When the United Nations designated Special Adviser on the Prevention on Genocide reaches the conclusion that genocide might be imminent, it should serve as a wake-up call for us all. As he so aptly put it last week in Juba, all the ingredients exist for the already horrific violence to escalate dramatically. Let me touch upon a few of those ingredients.

First, as has been stressed by our briefers, we have seen violence escalating not merely along political lines — which was bad enough — but also now dramatically along ethnic lines. This is not an assessment that anyone reaches lightly. It is an empirical assessment from a range of credible sources, including the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, the Secretary-General, serious independent human rights groups and independent journalists. We heard this ourselves with our own ears from petrified and thoroughly unscripted civilians. As just one example — unfortunately, there are too many — Sara Kakuni, who fled her village on the outskirts of Yei, is now living in a refugee camp in Uganda from where a lot of our information is coming because reporters are able to debrief those who arrive there often with nothing more than the shirts on their backs. This young women told a reporter that she and her two young daughters were kept awake at night by gun shots. She said,

> "[w]hen it stops, that is when they are slaughtering people with knives and pangas. Dinkas will open your door and kill you if you do not have their tribal scars".

This is the ethnic dimension.

Secondly, we do not have adequate forces in place to stop mass atrocities should the violence continue to escalate, as all those who watched South Sudan closely deem likely. The Secretary-General has said that even if the soldiers and police personnel deployed in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan were to use all necessary means to protect civilians under attack, as the Security Council has mandated them to do, they "do not have the appropriate reach, manpower or capabilities to stop mass atrocities" (*S/2016/951, p. 16*). And that is a big "if" because, as we all know, the South Sudanese Government continues to block peacekeepers from conducting the basic operations, such as the routine patrols that are necessary to even have a chance of protecting civilians. Many troop contributors cannot get access to their equipment. They are either delayed or blocked. These are capabilities that are being systematically denied to those who are there.

Even if they had them, the Secretary-General assesses that they would not be enough. The shortage of appropriate manpower is in part because the South Sudanese Government also continues to stand in the way of the deployment of the 4,000-strong Regional Protection Force to Juba, which the Council authorized more than three months ago — a force whose deployment would give an important and much needed boost to the 14,000 soldiers and police officers who are currently deployed.

The third ingredient involves a growing climate, which we have seen, of incitement, fear and intimidation. Government officials openly threaten journalists, as when the Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Martin Lomuro, with whom we met in Juba, told journalist at a press conference in September, "[i]f you are going to say something which is not correct... we will go after you, whichever hole you are in". When the Council visited

the country that same month, we heard directly from civil society leaders, felt their palpable sense of fear and, in many instances, were made aware of the threats that they received because of their work. A group that calls itself the Angry Youth of former Northern Bhar el-Ghazal posted the following message on Facebook directed at civilians in the southern Equatoria region:

> "We are going to take a quick revenge attack against Equatorians anywhere and anyplace from now on. We will find you and kill you. We will despicably and barbarically kill you."

If these were just words or incitement, that would be one thing, but as another recent example — once again, I stress that are too many — 20-year-old Abraham Aloro was recently interviewed in the Bidibidi refugee camp in Uganda shortly after fleeing an attack on his home town of Yei, the same town as Ms. Kakuni's. Aloro said,

> "[a]bout two weeks ago, soldiers came to my brother Emmanuel's house at night and demanded that he open the door. They accused him of joining the rebels. He had not, but they cut him to death with pangas, that is machetes".

Aloro's brother was 24-years-old.

And yet those who perpetrate these attacks, hack innocent civilians to death, burn down their homes, rape women, conscript men and young boys to fight and threaten journalists and human rights defenders enjoy nearly total impunity. The same goes for those who incite others to carry out such hateful acts. The message that the Government sends by not holding them accountable is crystal clear: "Keep at it; keep doing what you are doing".

The ingredients that I have described and that others have in more powerful and greater detail are ones that create a climate conducive to massive atrocities. With each of these factors, we are reminded of all of the warnings that the United Nations missed or saw but chose to ignore in places like Srebrenica and Rwanda in the 1990s. Given the accumulation of warnings, we have lost the right individually and collectively to act surprised in the face of even greater atrocities in South Sudan. None of us can say that we did not see it coming. The question therefore for us is — what will we do? We can start by acknowledging the deeply precarious situation on the ground and the fact that the international community's current approach is not stopping the cycle of violence.

Let us not treat the leaders of South Sudan as though they are responsible and credible interlocutors but engage them as the cynical actors whom they unfortunately have shown themselves to be, too often putting their short-sighted personal interests above the welfare of millions of their own people who are suffering. Let us stop asking for permission to carry out a mandate authorized by the Security Council in the interest of peace and security and, instead, start demanding it to unite around that message and mandate. Let us stop acting as if the principle of sovereignty, as critical as it is to the functioning of the international order, gives the South Sudanese Government or any Government license to commit mass atrocities against its own people or fuel a humanitarian crisis that has left millions of lives hanging in the balance.

In the coming days, the United States will put forward a proposal to impose an arms embargo on South Sudan and targeted sanctions on the individuals who have been the biggest spoilers to achieve lasting peace in the country. In the interest of the people of South Sudan and the region, this constitutes an important step towards curbing the ongoing violence perpetrated by the Government and opposition forces against civilians. Let me anticipate some of the comments that we will hear today from countries expressing scepticism with regard to these steps.

First, we know that no embargo can completely stop weapons from entering the country. To state the obvious, we also know that an arms embargo will not remove those weapons already in South Sudan, but an arms embargo could have a significant impact on the ground, particularly with regard to preventing the acquisition of arms that occurs daily. As we sit here, more arms are flowing into that country, including the acquisition of heavy weapons, aircraft and military vehicles that have been used to inflict such devastating violence in the conflict and were used in the conflict in Juba in July, during which United Nations staff, including our Special Representative and others, had to take shelter and duck the incoming gun fire aimed at them.

As the crisis escalates, we should all flash forward and ask ourselves how we will feel if Adama Dieng's warnings come to pass. We will wish we had done everything we could to hold spoilers and perpetrators to

account and limit to the maximum extent that we could the inflow of weapons. As we have learned elsewhere, an arms embargo is effective if there is a broad and robust commitment to its enforcement. Imposing new targeted sanctions designations will isolate the individuals who have consistently been responsible for the acts that have brought South Sudan to this moment and caused so much suffering. Such sanctions will limit the ability of such individuals to travel freely as they are doing now across the region or to move assets that could be used to fund further violence. There is no good reason why we would not deprive those who have shown a willingness to commit mass atrocities of the means of doing it more efficiently.

There is also no good reason why we should not try to prevent at least some weapons from getting into the hands of people who have consistently used them to kill innocent men, women and children. Those who have argued against taking such modest steps in the face of a conflict that has so many ingredients of mass atrocities have honestly had months to show that an alternative approach can work and help those people on our visit who cried out for our support for those actions. The approach we have been pursuing has been an approach of dialogue, of patience, of waiting for the next South Sudanese Government Cabinet meeting or the next letter to the Security Council — letters that include happy talk and bureaucratic language but describe no material change in the Government's behaviour. They are letters that also include falsehoods, including, as we saw yesterday, and as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General just reminded us, blatant misrepresentations.

The United States advocates continuing our engagement. We agree with all those who stress that dialogue is critical. However, we must complement that engagement with steps that show a far greater seriousness of purpose and steps that show that the Council means what it says and intends to actually perform the mission that was given to us, which was to enforce international peace and security, support our peacekeepers, take seriously the warning of multiple United Nations officials and protect civilians in desperate need.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I confess that I am very pleased to see that a number of delegations will be accompanying me in making official statements before the Council. Without prejudice to the statements that they might want to make in the informal consultations, I understand that making statements in public contributes to greater transparency in the work of this Council.

Allow me first to express my delegation's gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Ms. Ellen Løj. We commend her for her work over the past two years and wish her every success in her future endeavours. We would also like extend our thanks to the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, for his resounding briefing. We also thank Ambassador Seck for his briefing on the sanctions committee.

My delegation expresses its deepest concern regarding the current situation in South Sudan. I will start my remarks by referring to those who are suffering most from the conflict — civilians. The intensification of violence, particularly since this past July, has had devastating consequences for civilians. There have been violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances, rapes and other instances of sexual assault, arbitrary imprisonment, attacks on civilians, attacks on medical facilities, humanitarian aid workers, medical personnel and journalists.

Those violations of human rights are taking on an ethnic aspect. Hateful rhetoric is increasing across the entire country, which is entirely alarming given that such rhetoric could produce mass atrocities. The humanitarian crisis continues to grow in intensity and magnitude as a consequence of the armed conflict in various regions of the country, the deterioration of food security and the worsening of the economic situation.

The figures coming from the United Nations are concerning: more than 1 million refugees, more than 1.5 million displaced persons, close to 5 million people who are severely food insecure. We note, as mentioned by Mr. Dieng, that the degree of inaction in the implementation of the peace agreement, the humanitarian crisis and the proliferation of arms in the country are all ingredients that may lead to a dangerous escalation of violence. My delegation is concerned about a scenario in which the lives of civilians are in imminent danger and in which weapons are proliferating. We are seriously evaluating measures that could be taken to mollify the risk of more lost lives.

I urge all those involved in the conflict and the entire international community to help end the suffering

of the civilian population of South Sudan. In that sense, we ought to continually remind the South Sudanese Government that it is its principal responsibility to protect its own citizens. The Government must offer that protection regardless of the ethnic background or political affiliation of its citizens. Furthermore, the political leaders of South Sudan must act responsibly by rejecting any incitement to violence and opting for the path of dialogue. We continue to call for such action despite the fact that the actions taken by the Government seem to fall directly contrary to what we advise.

It is critical that immediate measures be taken in order to resume the political process and seek a peaceful solution to the conflict. My delegation believes that such measures would include the following three aspects.

First, the parties to the conflict must immediately establish a ceasefire. Secondly, the parties to the conflict must commit to resuming a dialogue, which should be transparent, inclusive and in good faith. The Security Council should play a more active role in the process of dialogue in South Sudan and serve as a pillar of support for the African Union, The Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other interested parties that might be involved. Thirdly, urgent measures must be taken to put an end to impunity. It is important to maintain efforts to implement chapter V of the peace agreement with respect to transitional justice, accountability, reconciliation and healing. On that point, we take note of the African Union's intentions to establish a hybrid court as soon as possible. We believe that the establishment of such a tribunal would be a positive, given that accountability for the grave violations of human rights in South Sudan is lacking and does nothing but perpetuate the conflict.

In another area, we are struck by the letter sent by the Government of South Sudan to the Council, with an annex contaiing the agreement between the Government of South Sudan and the Security Council about the implementation of the joint communiqué of 4 September. It would be helpful if the authorities of South Sudan were more careful with respect to the precision of their official communcations with the Council.

Finally, I would like to reference the work of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), which has a very ambitious and bold mandate and which works in an extremely complex and dangerous operational theatre. It is fundamental that UNMISS be able to fulfill its mandate, and we therefore urge South Sudan to lift any restrictions on the Mission in keeping with the commitments undertaken in the status of forces agreement.

As mentioned by Mr. Ladsous on a number of occasions when he has spoken on the topic of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, I am pleased to learn that the conclusions of the special independent investigation on the violent events that took place in Juba between 8 and 25 July and the response of UNMISS with regard to the protection of civilians has been taken into account by the Secretariat and will be implemented with oversight by a task force led from Headquarters.

It is also unavoidable and necessary to mention that, for the third time, we are seeing low-level results from UNMISS in terms of protecting civilians. This would appear to indicate that it is also very likely that there were also low-level results in the actions that should have been taken to prevent the problem from being reproduced. In that sense, we understand that there are three aspects that require special attention in order to avoid new failures in the protection of civilians.

First, we must review the processes for selecting leaders for the most relevant positions. Secondly, we must review the operational concept of UNMISS, the orders and operational procedures provided by the Mission for the protection of civilians and the use of force as required. Thirdly, we understand that it is necessary to require, as is done in situations of sexual exploitation and abuse, that the criminal and disciplinary norms of contributing countries take action in situations in which there is a failure in the protection of civilians, so that accountability does not end in simple repatriation, but reaches its furthest consequences. We especially believe that this last measure contributes to achieving an effective protection of civilians, which is the most sensitive job of peacekeeping and that there must be zero tolerance for failures in that regard.

In conclusion and as expressed by Ambassador Samantha Power a few moments ago, I would like to echo the Secretary-General's special report (S/2016/951) to the effect that United Nations peacekeeping operations are not equipped with the scope, staff or capacities to put an end to mass atrocities from occurring.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank the briefers. I would like to begin by paying particular tribute to Special Representative Ms. Ellen Løj for leading the

United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) through an extremely difficult period. As all three briefers have made so painfully clear, South Sudan is deteriorating before our very eyes. Ethnic tensions have reached a breaking point. The humanitarian situation now rivals the worst on the continent of Africa and the political talks that could have brought peace to millions now appear to be further from success than at any point in the country's brief history. We just cannot stay silent in the face of such tragedy. Here are the three things that we need to do to help the people of South Sudan.

First and foremost, we need to recognize that this is no ordinary civil war. Mr. Adama Dieng just said genocide does not happen overnight. The warning signs are there. That should play over and over our minds. He is telling us to open our eyes. He is telling us to act before it is too late. If we fail to do so, the consequences will be unspeakable. Just think, if that horrific process, if that tragedy were to become a reality, how could we sit around this table and ask what could we have done? Instead, today, we need to choose to take a different path.

This brings me to my second point. On the eve of South Sudan's independence, we unanimously adopted resolution 1996 (2011), which authorized the creation of UNMISS. Since that day, South Sudan has landed on the Council's agenda 70 times. On how many of those occasions has the Council spoken with one voice? Is it not time for us to unite to give the people of South Sudan hope? I know the United Kingdom is willing to do so. I know that the United Kingdom can and must play a greater, even more significant part in that effort as a member of the troika and as a bilateral partner. But this effort extends beyond any single Government. In fact, beyond the confines of this Chamber. We need a truly global effort — one that includes the members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the United Nations, and especially one that requires the political will, the political courage of South Sudan's leaders. They must admit to the scale of the problem and commit to being part of an inclusive and peaceful political solution.

My third point is that we already know the steps that need to be taken: an immediate end to the fighting; an immediate end to obstructions on UNMISS, the Regional Protection Force and humanitarians; an immediate end to hate speech and incitement; and a redoubling of collective political effort behind an inclusive political conversation. The situation in South Sudan described today is dark. It is grim. But ley us make no mistake that, as Ms. Ellen Løj said, it can get darker. For this reason, we need to listen to Mr. Adama Dieng and use the tools that we have to prevent that from happening. I agree with all of his proposals and that includes his point that it is urgent for the Security Council to impose an arms embargo. The United Kingdom has consistently called for that and we support the United States' proposal. We cannot stand idly by while the people of South Sudan have weapons used against them by their fellow citizens. There is no reason, given these conditions, to allow the continued flow of weapons to those who could eventually turn them on civilians.

Let me tackle concerns about an arms embargo head on. First, an arms embargo is no longer a matter of political leverage — we have other tools. Cooperation around a political process and stopping the flow of arms are not mutually exclusive. Secondly, we know that an arms embargo can be implemented because of the limited infrastructure in South Sudan — only one main tarmac road and only four main airports. Thirdly, we know that, with an embargo, the operation of heavy weaponry will be limited and the flow of ammunition will be reduced. Therefore, we know that an arms embargo will have an impact in the short, medium and long term. We know all the answers to all of those questions and we know that stopping these weapons will be a step in the right direction in this matter of life and death.

No matter how dark the situation is in South Sudan, it can get worse, but it can also get better, provided we take action. So let us act collectively and with authority, wisely using the tools at our disposal, to get where we are all aiming, namely sustainable peace and freedom from fear for the people of South Sudan.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS); Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide; and Ambassador Seck, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan, for their briefings.

Despite the fact that there have been three years of conflict, the situation in South Sudan remains

complex and volatile. Its effects are manifested at different levels. In the area of security, armed clashes among the parties continue, in violation of the cessation of hostilities agreements. Those clashes have kept UNMISS headquarters and the civilian settlements right in the line of fire. Examples of this would be Malakal in February and Juba in July. Similarly, the political crisis has limited the implementation of the peace agreement of August 2015, owing to the lack of a structural approach to the conflict, which leads to the exile of some of the parties to the agreement and a lack of inclusivity in the political process, which calls into question the legitimacy of the transition institutions. Added to that is the dire economic situation, which is a result of the fall in oil prices.

We are also concerned at the continuing violations of human rights, including sexual and gender-based violence, the continued recruitment of children, and, more recently, the incendiary pronouncements filled with hatred and incitement to violence among the various ethnic groups living in South Sudan, which could result in genocide, according to the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Mr. Adama Dieng.

Similarly, the humanitarian crisis facing that country, as manifested by the existence of more than 2.6 million internally displaced persons, including more than 1 million refugees in neighbouring countries, was aggravated by the incidents of violence in Juba during the month of July. At least 4.8 million South Sudanese are food-insecure, while in the last three years severe acute malnutrition among children under five years of age has increased by more than 150 per cent.

Faced with that dramatic reality, we are convinced of the fundamental role played by UNMISS, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians, its support for the political process and the creation of conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We must also bear in mind the adverse conditions under which the Mission operates on the ground, including logistical, operational and political challenges. We hope that those problems can be resolved promptly within the framework of the technical support group working with UNMISS and the Transitional Government of National Unity, and not the Salva Kiir regime, as described by the Panel of Experts on South Sudan established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) in its recent interim report (S/2016/963).

In addition, we welcome the opportunity to encourage the Mission to take all necessary means to improve the security and protection situation inside the civilian camps in Bentiu, which are the biggest in South Sudan, with 103,494 internally displaced persons, and have the highest number of distressing incidents, like those recorded in Malakal and Juba. We believe that it would be possible to introduce some of the positive practices implemented in other areas, such as the establishment of a zone free of arms around the perimeter.

We reiterate that it is not possible to achieve a military solution to the conflict afflicting the country and that we must combine efforts so as to revitalize the political process. We therefore decisively renew our full backing for all efforts and initiatives in that direction that could help the former President of Botswana, Festus Mogae, at the helm of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, working with the former President of Mali, Mr. Alpha Konaré, who is the High Representative of the African Union for South Sudan, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development for Eastern Africa.

We agree with the Secretary-General on the need to elaborate a clear political strategy to address the conflict in South Sudan and the region in a comprehensive way and to recognize the need to prevent the situation on the ground from escalating. That strategy should be marked by national ownership and include aspects such as the agreement to and effective implementation of a cessation of hostilities, including the demilitarization of the main cities of the country, given the fact that the dry season is coming soon and the troops will then have a greater ability to deploy on the ground. There is also a need to follow up on the necessity of reaching a solution to the political conflict and of adopting effective measures on disarmament and quartering the troops.

A solution needs to take into account the need to put into practice reconciliation initiatives and confidence-building measures between the parties in conflict, in order to prevent another escalation and the commission of mass atrocities, so that an inclusive dialogue can be fostered in which all voices, including dissenting ones, can be heard and taken into consideration. On the other hand, we consider of paramount importance the effective application of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, including its provisions on matters of security and transitional justice, for the purpose of ensuring,

among other things, that people will be held accountable, thereby breaking the prevailing cycle of impunity. That is the only framework for putting an end to the crisis and for reaching a lasting and sustainable peace in South Sudan. We also believe that such an approach serves to promote measures for the prevention and mitigation of local conflicts and for fostering initiatives that aim at reconciliation and the creation of a favourable climate for the existence of a culture of peace in the country, particularly at the intercommunal level.

In regard to the Regional Protection Force, we reaffirm that the activities of the Force ought to have the proper consent of the host State and be fully in accordance with the basic principles of peacekeeping operations. We are of the opinion that the Transitional Government of National Unity is advancing in that direction, as is reflected in its recent communication to the Council. Our delegation believes that the Security Council ought to act with caution, but with full determination, in its handling of the crisis.

In that regard, we wish to report that we will be circulating a brief on a draft press statement on the situation in South Sudan. We hope that we can count on the support of member States of this body in such times of vital importance and that the Council will maintain its unity, so that it can have a positive influence that contributes to reaching a peaceful resolution to the conflict that afflicts that brotherly African country.

Finally, I wish to ask a follow-up question of Mr. Dieng. Could he provide us with more detailed information on the plan of action to prevent the commission of criminal atrocities in South Sudan and on any measures being taken in the Mission at the base level in order to resist the propagation of hate speech, incitements to violence and interethnic strife in the country?

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this pressing matter. I would like to thank Ms. Ellen Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, for their detailed briefings. I listened to both briefings carefully and with great concern. Japan recognizes that, while Juba is relatively calm at this moment, the security situation in South Sudan as a whole is very tense, with frequent armed clashes and killings of civilians. We cannot be optimistic about how things will unfold and should continue to closely monitor the security situation in the country.

As many speakers before me have noted, the question now is how the Security Council can improve the situation. Our credibility is on the line. Whatever action is taken, our ultimate goal should be to advance the political process. While the will of the parties is of paramount importance, the engagement of neighbouring countries is the key factor. The decision by Kenya to withdraw its contingent only further highlights the importance of the role of South Sudan's neighbours. Many points from the special report (S/2016/951) on the review of the mandate of United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) are useful in that regard. It is indispensable that the United Nations coordinate with the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the key players supporting the political process, so as to more effectively facilitate the development of the political process. We highly commend the Secretariat for its efforts, in consultation with the AU and IGAD, to devise a comprehensive political strategy aimed at achieving a cessation of hostilities and at bringing the parties back to an inclusive political process. In that regard, we recognize the importance of the engagement of AU High Representative Konaré.

We welcome the suggestion to expand UNMISS patrols around the protection of civilians sites and to enhance cooperation with humanitarian actors. Increasing UNMISS interaction with communities and local authorities is also important.

Having carefully listened to the remarks by Mr. Dieng, we are deeply concerned about rising ethnic tensions in the country. In that vein, the proposal by the AU Commission to establish an over-the-horizon force to respond to possible mass atrocities caught our attention. We hope to see further consultations on the matter between the United Nations and the AU, including clarification as to how the proposed force's mandate would be differentiated from that of the UNMISS Regional Protection Force.

Japan, as an UNMISS troop-contributing country, attaches great importance to creating an environment in which effective activities can be safely undertaken. In that regard, we call on the Transitional Government of National Unity to cooperate further and more seriously with the United Nations. It is Japan's sincere hope that South Sudan will achieve peace and stability and make strides on the path to development. Japan, as a friend of South Sudan, has supported the country and has dispatched an engineering unit to UNMISS since

the independence of the country. Japan will continue to contribute to South Sudan's peace and security going forward.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express special thanks to Ms. Ellen Løj for her very hard and dedicated work on the ground in an extremely difficult environment.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I would like to begin by thanking Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj for her briefing and service to the United Nations, particularly in South Sudan. I would also like to thank Mr. Adama Dieng for his frank and clear briefing of the risks that we now face in South Sudan, as well as the President, Mr. Fodé Seck, for his similarly honest assessment of the situation as seen by the South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

As we have heard, the situation in South Sudan is appalling. The peace agreement negotiated last year is moribund, if not dead. There is no political process occurring, and the key actors are not inclined in any serious way to join one. We had the horrific outbreak of violence in Juba in July, and the response by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was the subject of a searing report by the Independent Special Investigator appointed by the Secretary-General. Since then, Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) troops and other militias continue to skirmish with each other and maraud about the country, committing atrocities against each other and innocent civilians, to the point where we are now being warned of the real risks of a full-scale civil war and even genocide.

Responsibility for the state of affairs rests principally with South Sudan's leaders, who have prioritized power and self-enrichment over the needs of their peoples. However, some responsibility also lies with those who have offered sanctuary to such people and their assets, with those who have supplied arms to fuel such a crippling war in the world's poorest country and, indeed, with those who have constrained the Council from taking effective action in response to a situation that has been brewing for many years. We are now being warned that a very real and serious disaster is looming at a time when UNMISS is ill-equipped to deal with it. As we know, UNMISS is operating in a non-permissive environment, beset by deep systemic and political problems and in a state of flux, facing changes in leadership in the field and indeed in New York next year.

UNMISS, as is sometimes forgotten, has four key tasks: protecting civilians, monitoring and investigating human rights abuses, creating the conditions for delivering humanitarian assistance, and supporting the implementation of the peace agreement. However, the only task that UNMISS has really been able to undertake in the past six months and longer is the first of those tasks and, as has been cruelly demonstrated, even that has not been done very well when the pressure has been on.

Responsibility for the situation lies primarily with the South Sudanese parties, especially the Government, which has used its position as host Government and its military strength to prevent UNMISS from carrying out its mandate. What do we do? We cannot abandon South Sudan, but neither can we magically conjure up an instant change in the behaviour of South Sudanese leaders or indeed in the way that UNMISS is constituted and operates. Despite the scale of the problem, we need to be focussed and realistic in our immediate objectives, until longer-term arrangements can be developed and put into place.

Right now, we first have to heed the warnings of Mr. Adama Dieng about the dangers of genocide and make it clear to South Sudan's leaders that they will be held to account if events deteriorate further. Secondly, we need to implement without delay the recommendations in the Independent Special Investigation report that are capable of immediate implementation.

The Council should be kept updated regularly on progress in implementation, and the Secretary-General and his team need to ensure that such updates are provided. We also need to set clear guidance and expectations for the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Force Commander, and require them to ensure that the civilian and military components of UNMISS work in support of each other's operations, particularly with respect to the implementation of the mandate, the rules of engagement and the use of force.

The Security Council and the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) also have a shared responsibility to address the systemic issues in UNMISS. We need to be having more frank conversations with each other so as to clarify expectations and to highlight the decisions by the TCCs not to follow orders. We should also be

working with Council members and the TCCs to document benchmarks and violations of the status of forces agreement and to build a shared understanding of the picture of non-compliance.

At the level of the Council, we and the international community have to take steps to change the calculus of the Government of South Sudan, and the SPLA-IO in particular, so as to give UNMISS the room it needs to conduct its basic mandate. As a Council, we need to send a clear signal, including through targeted sanctions and an arms embargo, that the status quo will no longer be tolerated.

The argument that sanctions must be linked to a political process in order to be effective, or that they might complicate the political process, only holds, in our view, when there is a realistic prospect for a political process. At the moment, there is none. In that case, aside from at least reducing the importation of weapons, especially heavy weaponry, the purpose of the embargo would be to signal that international tolerance of what has been going on in South Sudan has reached an end.

New Zealand therefore looks forward to working with the United States and other Council members on the draft resolution that is anticipated.

Mr. Gasso Matoses (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for your work at the helm of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) on South Sudan at a particularly difficult time. We wish to thank Ms. Løj for her efforts; she has Spain's full appreciation, gratitude and recognition for her commitment to her work as Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in seeking to promote peace in South Sudan.

We also thank Mr. Dieng for his timely visit to South Sudan and for coming to the Council to present us with his view of the events taking place in the country. His participation in the Chamber today was particularly relevant and necessary, given the real danger, as he has reported, of mass atrocities occurring in the country. What we have just heard from Mr. Dieng only reaffirms the urgency of the need to act immediately and to prepare ourselves for any possible occurrence.

As we are well aware, in 2005 world leaders endorsed the principle and doctrine of the responsibility to protect, which is designed to enable the United Nations to act and assist in situations such as the one Mr. Dieng has just described. I would like to pick up on one of his sentences that genocide is not an event, it is a process. The main responsibility for stopping that process is clearly one that rests with the authorities of South Sudan and all of the political and military actors in the country. However, when those actors are not capable of assuming nor desire to assume their responsibility, it is then up to the rest of the international community to meet the needs of the people who find themselves threatened. It is therefore up to the United Nations system and more specifically the Council.

In that regard I would like to highlight two points. First, there is a clear responsibility that must be assumed by the United Nations system and the Mission directed by Ms. Løj — we are highly aware of the limits that the Mission faces in its ability to meet that responsibility. This is why we are particularly satisfied to see the efforts undertaken by the United Nations to explore, together with the African Union, possible options aimed at finding a solution. Those options certainly include mechanisms to ensure the deployment of a regional protection force, or other options beyond the so-called over-the-horizon force referenced in the report (S/2016/951), which we consider to be an interesting initiative. Nevertheless, taking into account the fact that the protection of civilians should be our absolute priority, we hope that the interactions with the African Union will lead to clear, specific plans and proposals containing viable, realistic options.

One of the key elements in ensuring that Ms. Løj can fulfil her functions is the need to ensure the freedom of movement of UNMISS, as mentioned on many occasions in the Chamber. Without freedom of movement, it is impossible for her to provide follow-up or fulfil her mandate. The restrictions imposed on the Mission by the South Sudanese authorities are completely unacceptable. The security guarantees offered by the South Sudanese authorities should, as Ms. Løj has indicated, lead to genuine action in practice. Restoring confidence between the Mission and the South Sudanese authorities is essential. To that end, it is critical that the South Sudanese authorities act in good faith in their relationship with the United Nations and the Security Council, as we hope they will.

Moreover, it is true that the Mission's efforts do not depend only on third parties. Part of issue is the responsibility that the Mission must shoulder on its own. That is why it is important to implement the lessons learned from the incidents in Malakal and the

violent incidents in July and to ensure that they do not recur. We therefore reiterate our support for any measure geared towards preventing any repetition of those errors and towards ensuring the necessary accountability, when appropriate.

Additionally, a part of the responsibility to protect the people of South Sudan falls on the Council. We must make that commitment as of now. In December we must review the UNMISS mandate. We welcome the proposals put forth in the report and the ambitious goals set forth for the Mission, including bolstering the protection of civilians, ensuring humanitarian access, enhancing child protection, and fighting sexual abuse and violence. We are fully aware, as we have stated before, of the difficulties facing the Mission in guaranteeing the protection of civilians located outside of the camps.Nevertheless, we would be very interested in some of the elements put forth in the report, some of the innovative ideas on guaranteeing and improving that protection, for example, foot patrols to prevent sexual violence in areas surrounding the UNMISS camps, as well as the idea of exploring highly innovative measures, such as the protection of unarmed civilians on the part of civil society, which is already taking place somewhat successfully in some parts of the country.

Secondly, I wish to refer to another responsibility of the Council, namely, the need for capacity-building by the Mission and the Special Representative in order to better support the political process. As we have reiterated, it is certain that we require a collective effort to restart the dialogue and promote inclusivity in the political process. In that regard, the Council could consider other kinds of tools that might be available, for example, individual sanctions like those that it has available. People who are threatened with sanctions might think twice before choosing hatred or division.

Other instruments available to the Council include the possibility of finally imposing an arms embargo on South Sudan. We find it interesting that the United States delegation has announced its intention to propose that the Council establish an arms embargo. Spain has been saying for more than a year — nearly two years — that there is a need to adopt such a measure.

We believe, as the representative of the United Kingdom has just mentioned, that imposing an arms embargo is not, nor has it ever been, a political burden. Rather, it is a genuine instrument aimed at reducing violence on the ground. It would limit the deployment of heavy weaponry and reduce the possibility of escalating bellicose actions. Above all, we are convinced that having fewer weapons in the country would facilitate an environment more conducive to promoting inclusive political dialogue, which is the only way for the country to find its way out of the current situation.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset I wish to thank the briefers for their presentations.

The recent situation in South Sudan remains complex. On the one hand, the security situation in Juba is easing. President Kiir is continuing to implement the joint communiqué (S/2016/776, annex) issued by the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan and the Security Council. He has agreed to the participation of troops from relevant neighbouring countries in the Regional Protection Force. Furthermore, the Transitional National Legislative Assembly has started its work, and the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) has organized a workshop on setting up their own permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangements. On the other hand, the overall situation in South Sudan remains grim, with numerous difficulties involving humanitarian assistance. The international community should continue to provide assistance in the following areas.

First, it is necessary to continue pushing for a political process aimed at resolving the issue of South Sudan. The international community should accelerate efforts to ensure that all of the parties in South Sudan return to the track of implementing the political settlement and peace agreement in the interest of resolving differences through dialogue and negotiation, in a joint effort to achieve the peace, stability and development of South Sudan.

China supports all means aimed at strengthening further implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in the areas of good offices, the protection of civilians and assisting humanitarian access, with a view to resolving the problems encountered in the process of cooperation with the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan through patient dialogue and consultation.

Secondly, it is necessary to ensure the full participation of regional and subregional organizations. China has consistently backed the settlement of African issues by Africans using their own methodologies. It

has supported the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in its leading role in the settlement of the South Sudan issue. The United Nations must increase its support to the JMEC Chairperson, Mr. Festus Mogae, and the African Union High Representative for South Sudan, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, so as to enhance mutual cooperation and coordination in the interest of enhancing synergy in the political settlement of the South Sudan issue.

Thirdly, the implementation of the relevant Council resolutions must enjoy the support and cooperation of the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan. The Transitional Government is committed to the implementation of the joint communiqué issued with the Security Council and the implementation of resolution 2304 (2016). It is also committed to supporting the full implementation of the UNMISS mandate and the work of the humanitarian actors.

The Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan agreed to allow the relevant neighbouring countries to send their troops to participate in the regional protection force and agreed to discuss with UNMISS lands for the regional protection force. The Security Council and the relevant parties should seize this opportunity to encourage the Transitional Government to promote consultations with all parties involved and implement the joint communiqué and relevant Council resolutions in a joint effort to promote peace and stability in South Sudan.

Fourthly, China commends Ambassador Seck for his leadership in the active work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan and has taken note of the interim report submitted by the Panel of Experts to the Sanctions Committee (S/2016/963). China urges the Panel to strictly abide by the Council's mandate and conduct its work objectively and fairly in putting forward its practical recommendations to the Sanctions Committee concerning South Sudan.

In today's complex situation, the Security Council should send further positive signals to all sides and encourage all parties in South Sudan to continue their efforts to implement the peace agreement. The Council should be prudent in taking action on the sanctions, with a view to avoiding complicating the situation.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Ms. Ellen Løj, for her briefing and her active work in her post. We wish her all the very best.

We also take note of the letter dated 9 November, the recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation in South Sudan (S/2016/950), the special report of the Secretary-General on the review of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2016/951), the interim report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan (S/2016/963), and your statement, Mr. President, in your capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan.

We note the recommendations issued by the Secretary-General on the Mission's mandate, wherein he speaks of the priority given to promoting a peaceful process and normalizing the situation in the security area. That implies that peacekeepers should provide capacity-building support to South Sudanese power structures. Those proposals are in line with our own approach. We think that the way to improve the humanitarian situation and the human rights situation in South Sudan lies through a lasting settlement on the basis of inclusiveness.

As a step towards an inclusive political process and national reconciliation, we welcome the amnesty announced by President Salva Kiir for the supporters of Riek Machar who participated in the armed clashes in Juba in July and who are currently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General that strengthening the peacekeeping capacity of the Mission, including the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, is not a panacea against all of the country's ills.

With regard to the implementation of resolution 2304 (2016) and the joint communiqué between the Transitional Government of National Unity and the Security Council of 4 September (S/2016/776, annex), we see a certain amount of progress there, which shows that there is a constructive nature to the currently ongoing negotiations with Juba. In particular, the South Sudanese agreed to host contingents from Kenya, Ethiopia and Rwanda. It is not their fault that, because of the well-known hasty and ill-advised actions of the Secretariat, Nairobi refused to send a new contingent to South Sudan and is withdrawing the contingent that was already deployed. One more positive element here is the letter of 15 November containing the draft

agreement between Juba and the Mission, addressing the implementation of the communiqué of 4 September.

We thank Mr. Dieng for his briefing. We share his concerns with regard to the spread in South Sudan of rhetoric and actions targeting individual ethnic groups. What draws our attention is the fact that such rhetoric frequently comes from various kinds of armed and criminal groups and undisciplined elements of various power structures. We would therefore refrain from drawing the conclusion that they represent an intentional policy, all the more so since some parties have a tendency to exploit the emotional reaction of the international community to the really difficult and dramatic situation in South Sudan. In particular, some colleagues refer to that situation in order to justify their appeals to expand the sanctions regime against that country, including an arms embargo by the Security Council.

Our position on that has not changed. We think that implementing such a recommendation would hardly be helpful in settling the conflict. Furthermore, newer sanctions could further complicate the relationship among the host country, the peacekeepers and the international community. Generally speaking, introducing targeted sanctions now against South Sudanese leaders would be the height of irresponsibility. Someone probably wants very much to see President Kiir share the fate of Al-Qadhafi, against whom targeted sanctions were also introduced.

In the Secretary-General's letter of 9 November, we did not note any conclusion that the Government is impeding the deployment of the Regional Protection Force in South Sudan. Quite the contrary, there is positive movement in that area. Therefore, even if we were to follow the formal logic of resolution 2304 (2016), which was, by the way, supported by our Western colleagues, the reintroduction of an arms embargo by the Security Council against South Sudan would be premature.

With regard to the sanctions against South Sudan, there is again no unity among African countries, including the neighbouring countries. That lack of unity could undermine the effectiveness of potential restrictions. We can see that in the example of a number of African countries, including the Central African Republic, where sanctions, including the arms embargo, are not working. By the way, with regard to the communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 19 September and their statement after their visit to Juba at the end of October, we saw no call for new sanctions either. We draw that to the attention of those colleagues who are selective in referring only to those decisions of the African Union that they find useful.

Another point needs to be made. There is an official arms embargo against South Sudan imposed by the European Union (EU), but the United Nations experts confirm that a functioning network supplying weapons to South Sudan is operating in European countries, so the EU embargo is not working. Where is the guarantee that a United Nations embargo would function? By the way, we are surprised by the double standards of some colleagues who actively call for an arms embargo against South Sudan while their own nationals and companies are involved in supplying weapons to that country.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation appreciates the briefings by Ms. Ellen Løj and Mr. Adama Dieng and by Ambassador Fodé Seck as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan. Based on those briefings, Malaysia is deeply concerned about the protracted conflict and the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian situations in South Sudan. The briefers described in detail the exacerbations of the crisis, the renewed violence and the heightening of tensions along ethnic lines, the potential risk for genocide and the dire humanitarian situations.

Despite the Council's numerous efforts to urge the parties to the conflict to find a political solution, South Sudan continues, unfortunately, to slide into chaos. As States bear the primary responsibility to protect their populations, we urge the Transitional Government of South Sudan to do its utmost to protect its people and to urgently prioritize the welfare, safety and security of all of the people of South Sudan, regardless of ethnicity and political affiliations. National leaders must rise above the parochial politics of divisions and ethnicity and promote unity for all South Sudanese.

As previous speakers have rightly advocated, an inclusive political process and national reconciliation provide the only legitimate path towards restoring peace and stability in South Sudan. Any call to arms would only lead to further protracted conflict at the price of more deaths and destruction. Despite the political impasse and the stalled implementation of the peace

agreement, the leadership and solidarity shown by regional partners, particularly the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, led former President Mogae of Botswana, to mediate a dialogue and reinvigorate the peace process, continue to provide some glimmers of hope. It is imperative that the Security Council continue to support those mediation efforts and sustain engagement with regional partners, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, as well as the European Union, for a comprehensive approach to addressing the current situations in South Sudan.

Malaysia has always maintained its firm commitment and support for United Nations peacekeeping operations as a tool for the maintenance of international peace and security. In that context, we reiterate our full support for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and commend the men and women of the Mission, who have continued to operate under enormous pressure in challenging circumstances. UNMISS must implement its mandate effectively. That is extremely crucial, particularly in the current situation in South Sudan. It is also imperative that both the South Sudanese authorities and the armed forces step up their efforts to enhance cooperation in order to ensure the swift implementation of resolution 2304 (2016), including finalizing the outstanding matters on the establishment and deployment of the original protection force.

At the same time, it is also crucial for the parties to engage in further discussions aimed at resolving any misunderstandings, and address their differences. For example, UNMISS views the request for the participation of Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism liaison personnel in UNMISS convoys as obstructions to UNMISS operations, whereas the South Sudanese authorities view the proposal as a positive mechanism aimed at facilitating the movement and access of UNMISS into difficult areas.

Clearly more should and could be done to enhance the trust and confidence levels between UNMISS and the South Sudanese authorities. Within UNMISS, we hope that the task force established by the Secretariat will be able to swiftly implement the recommendations of the Independent Special Investigation with a view to restoring the credibility of the Mission.

We thank Ambassador Fodé Seck for his excellent stewardship of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) on South Sudan. Malaysia will continue to work closely with and support the Committee, as we view the its work as an integral aspect in supporting the peace process and our collective objective of restoring lasting peace and stability in South Sudan.

To conclude, as Ms.Løj approaches the end of her tenure as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS at the end of this month, allow me to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation for her relentless efforts and dedication in carrying out her duties over the past two years. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Mrs. Gueguen-Mohsen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General to South Sudan, Ms. Ellen Løj; Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng; and you, Sir, in your capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) on South Sudan, for your briefings. I would also like to particularly welcome the activities of Ms. Løj in heading the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) over the past few years in very different circumstances.

The seriousness of the situation that has just been described fully justifies today's open meeting to speak about the matter. France is deeply concerned by the threat of a new escalation of violence in South Sudan. Since the conflict began almost three years ago, civilians have been the victims of unspeakable violence and abuse. Men, women and children have been executed, murdered, raped, mutilated and abducted. Violence has spread to many regions of the country. In addition to the fighting between the two parties to the conflict, there are now cross-community conflicts, ethnic violence and armed group attacks.

While that is already a bleak picture, today South Sudan is in danger of plunging further into a new spiral of violence. The Secretary-General, the Panel of Experts of the Sanctions Committee and Mr. Dieng himself have sounded the alarm. They have alerted us to hate speech and incitement to murder, which makes us fear the worst. They have drawn our attention to the risk of an escalation of violence, particularly along ethnic lines, which could result in mass violence.

The Security Council cannot turn a deaf ear to such dangers. As was underscored by Mr. Dieng, such a spiral of violence is not inevitable and therefore can be prevented. The people of South Sudan cannot be

abandoned to such a fate. They are in danger and we have to provide them with the necessary support. The Security Council must therefore mobilize to prevent South Sudan from descending into chaos. It cannot and must not stand idly by. It has to act in accordance with its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations and take the necessary measures.

First of all, establishing an arms embargo is now urgent. The ongoing influx into South Sudan of light and heavy weapons feeds the conflict and makes it easier to commit acts of violence against civilians. We need to do our utmost to slow this flow of weapons. France has long called for such an embargo and regrets that the Security Council could not decide on it earlier. However, there is still time. We support the United States proposal and call on members of the Council to stop prevaricating.

Next, the resumption of the political process is critical to restoring hope to South Sudan. The conflict cannot be resolved militarily; any settlement must be political. The parties must therefore urgently commit to ceasing hostilities and participate in inclusive dialogue that can stabilize the governance of the country and move towards an exit to the crisis. For that reason, we welcome the active roles that the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union have played since the beginning of the crisis in trying to promote a political solution. Today more than ever it is necessary to redouble the efforts in that regard, and the United Nations can help, in particular through the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The Security Council must also play its role by supporting those efforts. We must stand ready to remind those who seeking to impede peace initiatives that the Council is ready to take necessary measures against them.

Lastly, UNMISS must be in a position to carry out its mandate. We strongly condemn the attacks perpetrated against the Mission and humanitarian workers. The obstacles that have been set up to prevent UNMISS access to vulnerable populations are unacceptable. We call on the Government of South Sudan and all the parties to the conflict to guarantee full freedom of movement to UNMISS. The Government of South Sudan must also honour its commitments and ensure the proper deployment of all Mission contingents, including the Regional Protection Force, and their equipment.

I also want to reiterate the full support of France to UNMISS, which is implementing its protection of civilians mandate in very difficult circumstances. In that regard, we welcome the efforts deployed by the Secretariat to draw lessons from the shortcomings noted during the outbreak of violence in Juba in July. We welcome and support the commitment of the Secretariat to implementing the recommendations as quickly as possible. The Council must support those efforts.

The civilian populations of South Sudan have suffered for far too long from the war, which to them seems endless. That situation could deteriorate further. It is the Council's responsibility to mobilize in order to prevent South Sudan from plunging further into the spiral of violence. It is time for us to act.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I join other delegations in thanking today's briefers for their useful updates. I would also like in particular to pay sincere tribute to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Løj for her dedicated service at the helm of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which I was privileged to witness while in South Sudan on the Council's most recent mission. In the light of the information that we just heard, I would like to highlight three main points.

First, we are extremely concerned by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in South Sudan. As we just heard, violence is surging in Equatoria, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Upper Nile and Unity states, where armed actors on all sides systematically target civilians and commit sexual violence and abuses and other gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. As we have just learned, while we have been speaking here fighting has reportedly erupted in Unity state between military forces and fighters loyal to Riek Machar, killing at least 15 people. I am still worried that we cannot rule out a further escalation of violence once the rainy season ends this month.

Ukraine also takes reports of growing ethnic tensions and the spread of hate speech, hostility and incitement to violence very seriously. In that regard, we believe that the visit to South Sudan by Special Adviser Adama Dieng was an extremely timely move. We support his proposals and ask him to continue monitoring the situation on the ground and keep the Security Council fully updated. The worsening security climate has resulted in mass displacements, with over 1 million South Sudanese having sought refuge in more safe regions of the country or in neighbouring countries. Nearly half of the population requires

constant humanitarian assistance. All of that underlines the urgent need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the full implementation of the ceasefire. We could not agree more with Ms. Ellen Løj that the guns have to be silenced. I would only add that the guns have also to be prevented from flowing into South Sudan. In that light, we are ready to work on the relevant proposal of the United States delegation.

The continuous fighting suggests that the parties still hope to achieve their goals by military means, while it is clear that the political process is the only realistic way towards peace and stability in South Sudan. That is why we urge the parties to immediately resume the implementation of the peace agreement in good faith and without preconditions. That includes the resumption of participation of all parties in the work of the Transitional Government and the promotion of confidence-building and reconciliation measures.

At such a critical time, it is very important that the United Nations, and in particular UNMISS, continue assisting the South Sudanese people. Over the past month, there has been some improvement in removing obstructions to the Mission's ability to implement its mandate, yet many restrictions, in particular those of freedom of movement and humanitarian access, still remain. In that regard, we urge the Transitional Government to respect its commitments under the status of forces agreement and fully implement relevant provisions of the joint communiqué of 4 September, agreed to by the Council in Juba. Ukraine believes that the deployment and operatinalization of the Regional Protection Force, as envisaged in resolution 2304 (2016), would help to stabilize South Sudan.

We welcome the fact that the Transitional Government and the Secretariat have come to an agreement on the composition of the troop-contributing countries. In that respect, my delegation looks forward to the rapid conclusion of deployment preparations and the arrival of troops. It is also critical that the Transitional Government fully cooperate with UNMISS in the operationalization of the Regional Protection Force. To sum up, in our view there are the following prerequisites for the stabilization of the situation in South Sudan: the cessation of hostilities, resumption of the implementation of the peace agreement, the removal of obstructions to UNMISS work and the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): I thank all briefers for their briefings, and in particular I commend Ms. Ellen Løj for her service and efforts in the very difficult and challenging conditions to support the people of South Sudan in reaching sustainable peace after years of conflict. We wish her the best in her future endeavours.

Five years after the proclamation of South Sudan's independence and 20 months of conflict, the South Sudanese parties signed a peace agreement brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, which was endorsed by the African Union and the international community. Today, following the incidents that took place in Juba between 8 to 11 July, the situation has worsened. Progress on the implementation of the provisions of the peace agreement has been halted, and instead of increased dialogue we have borne witness over the past month to the resurgence of hate speech and incitements to violence.

The international community must send a clear message to the leadership of South Sudan. First, the leadership must recall its responsibility to protect the civilian population. Secondly, it must be informed that the international community will not tolerate a genocide or war crimes and crimes against humanity in South Sudan. Thirdly, perpetrators of all acts of violence, in particular ethnic and/or sexual violence, will be held accountable.

We as the international community also have a responsibility to revive the peace agreement in South Sudan, which is the legal instrument signed by the parties and international partners. In that regard, we think that an arms embargo is not a solution to the conflict. The efforts of the international community must encourage the parties towards more dialogue and inclusivity. However, we recognize that some important steps that have been taken by the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan regarding the operationalization of the Regional Protection Force authorized by the Security Council, but we also regret all violations of the status of forces agreement and the blockade that has created additional challenges for the performance of the Mission.

I would like to ask Mr. Dieng a question. In light of the difficulty in deploying the 4,000 personnel of the Regional Protection Force, what does he think of increasing the number of unarmed civilian protectors who are currently protecting civilians in 10 locations

around the country, including the protection of civilian areas in Bentiu, Malakal and Juba?

We commend you for your hard work, Sir, in your capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) on South Sudan, and we welcome your initiative to visit South Sudan and other countries of the region. It is important to establish contact with the reality of South Sudan and the various stakeholders in order to address misunderstandings regarding the role of the Committee. On the other hand, we regret the fact that the Panel of Experts that supports the Committee produces biased, unbalanced and controversial reports that are contradicted by other issues reported by other United Nations organs. It should be noted with regret by the Panel that the peace agreement has already collapsed and that the Transitional Government of National Unity has become a regime, with all its negative and biased perceptions.

We believe that it is our responsibility, as members of this organ, which is responsible for maintaining peace and security, to support the people of South Sudan in addressing their current challenges and help them on the path towards sustainable peace. Angola is fully committed to those objectives.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Dieng to respond to questions and comments raised.

Mr. Dieng (*spoke in French*): I wish first to address the question raised by the representative of Venezuela concerning the measures that might be taken with a view to reducing prevailing tensions.

(*spoke in English*)

I should, first of all, indicate that, in close cooperation with my colleague Herve Ladsous, even prior to my trip to South Sudan we had put in place a working group to look into the measures that need to be taken to prevent a further escalation of the current violence. While I was in South Sudan, what I offered as a way to help, beginning at the local level in Yei River state — where, as I indicated and was confirmed by almost everybody, the situation had been deteriorating — was to facilitate a dialogue with the community and religious leaders. We felt that such dialogue was extremely important.

We also felt that it was important to develop a communication plan at Headquarters in order to increase global and regional awareness of the risk of mass atrocities in South Sudan. As a matter of fact, as I indicated in my presentation, I hope — and I mentioned this to our colleagues in the United Nations country team while I was there — that they will also help to monitor, on a daily basis, all the incitements and examples of hate speech, with the help of the staff on the ground, including in the local languages, so that they have the most accurate record of such messages.

We also felt that it will be very important to engage further with the African Union and the countries of the region, and I am very pleased, Mr. President, that you will be visiting the region in December. As a matter of fact, the African Union High Representative for South Sudan and former President of Mali, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, is very concerned about this and will be in Juba himself in the coming days to follow up on the issue. I think we should provide him with as much support as we can, so I have already alerted him and have been in contact with the office of Mr. Mogae, the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, encouraging them to make that trip to Juba. If necessary, we are considering activating the mechanism of the African Union's Panel of the Wise to discuss additional initiatives. In the light of the seriousness of the situation, we are also considering asking the Secretary-General — with your support, Mr. President, and that of all the members of the Security Council — to convene a high-level meeting to address the situation.

I have also been urging Riek Machar himself to make clear to him his responsibilities from his side. At the end of the day, of course, this is in the hands primarily of the South Sudanese themselves, and primary responsibility lies with South Sudan. As I reminded the authorities while I was there, President Salva Kiir is in charge of law and order. He is not the President of the Dinka or of the Nuer, he is the President of all South Sudanese and the father of the nation. I have even asked him to clarify the speech he delivered on 19 October, to reassure the people that he did not mean that he would be going to Equatoria to fight them. I have also offered to provide two investigators to help the South Sudanese judiciary start investigating the allegations of crimes committed in Yei River state. At the end of the day, the people must be reassured, or they will continue to flee the country, and we must put an end to this situation.

Concerning the question raised by the Ambassador of Angola, it is clear that the deployment of the 4,000

people in the Regional Protection Force is one thing, but ultimately, after recruiting and placing 4,000 troops or even more, that will not solve the problem on the ground. What we desperately need, and I insisted on this while I was in Juba, is to have a truly inclusive process. In the end, with the entire debate that has taken place regarding Riek Machar's replacement by Taban Deng Gai, and whatever interpretation can be put on that — and the man must be included — what is most important is not about personalities but about getting civil society and everybody else on board. I was with the elders of the Equatorias, and that is one of the reasons that I said at some point while I was there that there is still hope for ensuring that. But I can say that in the discussions with some of those actors, one can feel the hatred, and that situation must be calmed down.

But, unfortunately, what is most worrying is the amount of arms that are circulating. Many young people have those weapons and are doing whatever they can to try to survive. Because the country is split everywhere, not just in Yei. That is why I have to say that

(*spoke in French*)

this is a very serious moment in South Sudan, and it is time to act and to act urgently.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your leadership of the Council for this month, and to pledge our full cooperation during the remainder of your presidency. I would also like to thank Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide; and Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015), for their briefings.

I would like to begin by expressing our appreciation to you and the members of the Council for giving us the opportunity to share our views on the Secretary-General's letter of 9 November to the Security Council and his reports on the security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan (S/2016/950) and the role of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (S/2016/951). There are allegations in the reports whose accuracy is debatable; our intention is not to contest them but simply to help the Council and all the parties concerned to get a better understanding of the root causes of the problems so that we can develop appropriate remedies.

South Sudan fully understands that the motive behind the work of the United Nations, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other international partners is their growing concern for the security, safety and general welfare of our people. We share that concern not only because we are the country affected, but also because we are part and parcel of the United Nations and the international community, and we share the same moral values and normative principles. We also remember, with deep gratitude, the support we received from the international community in the struggle for liberation that led to our independence. The support of the United Nations and the international donor community for our newly independent country that led to the establishment of UNMISS is also something for which our Government and people remain deeply grateful.

Our people's long struggle, which went on intermittently for half a century before we achieved independence, was basically a quest for the ideals that the United Nations stands for — peace, security and the enjoyment of all human rights. In other words, it represented the pursuit of universal human dignity. That being the case, we must ask why South Sudan has suddenly descended into its current crisis.

To answer this question, the starting point must be that the objective of restoring peace and security and addressing the humanitarian needs of our people is first and foremost the major concern of the people and the Government of South Sudan. If we fail, it should be recognized that the explanation lies not in a lack of will but in the limits of our national capacity to respond. The conflict has intensified divisions among our leaders and their people. We should, however, be all aware that the crisis in South Sudan — indeed, as in many other countries experiencing conflict — is a result of internal and external factors alike. Rather than pointing fingers, we should all cooperate and understand that we are in it together and, in one way or another, all affected and share the responsibility for the crisis.

In the hierarchy of shared responsibility, we fully recognize what the Secretary-General has highlighted in his observations on the situation and that the primary responsibility to protect all citizens, without discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity

or political affiliation, rests with the Government. We also acknowledge that it is the responsibility of the Government to meet the humanitarian needs of its people. That is the core of responsible sovereignty.

In the case of South Sudan, the critical question then becomes one of strengthening the capacity of the State to discharge these national obligations effectively, bearing in mind the principle that the international community has the complementary responsibility to provide a State in need with supplementary assistance to meet its national responsibility. It should be recalled that South Sudan was grossly neglected by the colonial administration and has been devastated by the long war that erupted in 1955, a few months before independence on 1 January 1956. It should therefore be recognized that the country continues to lack the capacity necessary to deal with its grave challenges in a robust manner. These challenges emanate from internal and external factors alike, particularly the continuing legacy of the long war between the north and South Sudan. Both sets of causes require the diligent efforts of the two countries and the international community to be effectively addressed in a constructively dialogue.

The necessary support of the world bodies to address these interconnected crises must strengthen the institutions whose primary responsibility is to protect the people. This support should be based on a genuine, mutual and respectful cooperation that does not infringe on the sovereignty of the Republic of South Sudan. It should also be premised on the fact that there is an elected and legitimate Government in South Sudan that fully represents the will of the people. It is, of course, undeniable that the country is now divided and that it is also the responsibility of the Government, supported by the international community, to restore the unity of the leaders and their people. However, nowhere in the world can a sovereign Government accept an armed rebellion. As we have seen in comparable situations, it is the responsibility of the international community to assist Member States in stopping and eliminating armed rebellion against an elected Government.

South Sudan also agrees with the Secretary-General that the inclusion of all ethnic groups and political factions should be the desired objective so long as these groups adhere to the democratic principles and the rule of law. The international response to our situation has, however, been characterized by a persistent tendency to strike a moral equivalency that does not apportion accountability for the crises or recognize the difference between the elected Government and an armed rebellion. It is important for the international community to identify those who are genuinely striving to find workable solutions through legal institutions and those undermining efforts to restore peace, unity and stability, particularly by resorting to violence.

An example of this misleading tendency towards moral equivalency is the statement in the report that categorically asserts the lack of inclusivity in the political process and the increasing feelings of political marginalization among other ethnic groups, many of which believe that the Government is pursuing a policy of Dinka domination across the country. Rather than make an assertion based on presumed feelings, a responsible observation must look into the composition of the Government at all levels. It is a glaring fact that members of the Nuer group and other smaller ethnic groups have always been well represented at the senior levels of the Government and the army, and indeed throughout the bureaucracy.

It should be remembered that the Dinka are the overwhelming majority across the country, and their numbers cannot be minimized by any notion of proportional representation. But although the Dinka are the largest group in the country, South Sudan has over 60 ethnic groups and there is no way for one group, out of self-interest, to dominate all the other groups. If anything at all, the Dinka national leadership has tended to bend over backward not only to ensure the representation of all groups, but also to counter any fears of Dinka domination. To assert the opposite is to be blind to the facts, stress the tendency to stigmatise one group and promote a self-fulfilling dangerous propaganda.

As the popular saying goes, actions speak louder than words. President Salva Kiir, in his commitment to peace, security, stability and the general welfare of all his people, has repeatedly demonstrated his determination to end the crisis in the country. Far from promoting Dinka domination, he has promoted the unity of South Sudan by incorporating Nuer militias into the Sudan People's Liberation Army, to the point at which over 70 per cent of the army is Nuer. It is however, those former militias who became Riek Machar's rebel army. And yet, Nuer representation in the Government and the army remains significant, and the President has maintained his commitment to the policy of inclusiveness.

We want to draw the attention of the Council to the appointment of General Taban Deng Gai as First Vice-President so that the peace process is not held hostage by the absence of Riek Machar from the country. First Vice-President Gai is already demonstrating his commitment to move the peace process forward. It should be remembered that he was a signatory to the initial security arrangement of the Machakos Protocol in 2004 and his contribution to the liberation struggle is well known to the people of South Sudan. He was also the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM-IO) negotiating team. Since his appointment as First Vice-President, Gai has been given full support by the President to implement the agreement and through its established modalities, address the grievances of our people.

While there is no intention to exclude any citizen from the political process, there is no justification, locally or internationally, to support Riek Machar's continued armed rebellion against an elected Government. It is a misleading assumption to assert, as the report does, that Riek Machar retains significant political and military support. The implication is that such support is from the Nuer community. But in addition to Taban Deng Gai's role as First Vice-President, and a number of other Nuers in important positions in Government, significant numbers of the Nuer ethnic group fled into Dinka areas and are living peacefully with their host Dinka communities. There are, of course, genuine grievances among members of various groups, including sections of the Dinka that need to be addressed. The Government is however committed to correcting the differences among groups, some of which go deep into the history of inequitable development in the Sudan and now South Sudan, but this should not be confused with the tendency of political entrepreneurs to exploit ethnic politics.

We must acknowledge that recognizing the efforts of the Government is a source of encouragement to continue positive reforms, while disregarding such efforts can be a disincentive. In addition to Gai's appointment, the President recently made several decisions by republican order — one instructing the Ministerial Committee of the Transitional Government of National Unity, charged with the implementation of the joint communiqué and resolution 2304 (2016), to expedite and complete its work within 14 days, and the other establishing a Humanitarian High-level Oversight Committee led by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs to work towards removing all impediments affecting humanitarian operations in the country. The President also established by republican order a National Planning Committee, chaired by the Minister in the Office of the President, to enhance the security and production of oil, launch infrastructure projects and stimulate external support.

As such entities are intended to address the relevant aspects of the crises confronting the country, their active coordinating role should be recognized and respected by our international partners to ensure more effective partnership in providing assistance to the country. Close partnership with existing Government institutions is crucial not only to achieving positive results, but also to enhancing the capacity of the Government to be more effective in the delivery of vital services to the people of South Sudan.

Permit me now to comment on two other issues that have been of concern to the international community and considerable debate recently — the proposed Regional Protection Force and the formation of a hybrid court. Both proposals have been accepted by the Government of South Sudan. It must, however, be recognized that there are significant challenges associated with both the force and the court that should be constructively addressed.

The Regional Protection Force should be approached in a spirit of cooperation and with the active engagement of the Government of South Sudan and in a manner that reinforces and strengthens the command and control of our armed forces and respect for the rule of law. International involvement should be a supplement or reinforcement, rather than a replacement, to the Government's efforts to protect its own people, in accordance with its national responsibility. The hybrid court should also be seen as complementary to the national judicial responsibility for justice. In that connection, it must carefully balance the quest for justice and accountability with the promotion of peace and national reconciliation. For both the protection force and the hybrid court to succeed, cooperation and constructive partnership with the Government are crucial. As such, we have agreed to implement the agreement of the joint Transitional Government of National Unity and Security Council communiqué of 4 September, in the spirit of cooperation to advance peace, security, stability and reconciliation in our country.

I would also like to comment on the proposed arms embargo on all parties engaged in the conflict. Although the motive of that proposal as it aims to end the violence that continues to devastate the country, it is unfortunately another indication of the moral equivalence that does not distinguish between a legitimately elected Government and an armed rebellion intent on overthrowing the Government. We continue to stress that it is the responsibility of the Government to protect all its citizens and defend its borders. To deny the Government the necessary means for discharging that responsibility is to basically undermine its sovereignty, which is totally unacceptable.

Finally, much has been said about increasing violence targeting ethnic groups and violations of the UNMISS status of forces agreement. Without challenging the accuracy of such allegations, what should be highlighted is that they do not in any way reflect Government policy. It is undeniable that incidents occur on the ground that responsible authorities may not be aware of and, therefore, cannotbe control on the spot. It is, however, important that the report of the Secretary-General document specific cases where measures were taken by elements at the lower levels of the operational hierarchy, in violation of the agreed guidelines, which, when brought to the attention of senior authorities, were corrected. This further underscores the problems of capacity and the need for the capacity-building support of the international community.

To conclude, we recognize that our country is confronting severe challenges and that our national capacity to deal with the crisis is severely constrained. We need the complementary support of the international community not only because South Sudan is a State Member of the United Nations, but also because the Government and the people of South Sudan are the beneficiaries of that cooperation. However, such cooperation should not in any way come at the cost of our hard-won independence and national sovereignty. We trust that the United Nations and our international partners will respond to our aspirations and concerns to promote constructive and productive partnerships.

I also take this opportunity to thank Ms. Ellen Løj for her service with UNMISS in South Sudan, and wish her the best in her future endeavours. We pledge our cooperation with her successor.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7815

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7815th meeting
Thursday, 17 November 2016, 9 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Seck	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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16-39030 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 9 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/974, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2319 (2016).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the vote.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I would like to start by thanking Council members for the extension that allowed us to work intensively over these last couple weeks with the Russian Federation to secure the text that we have just voted on unanimously today, and I offer my sincere thanks for the spirit in which Russia carried out these negotiations. The stakes on this matter could not be higher.

The eyewitness accounts often start the same way. Helicopters buzzing overhead. Barrel bombs shoved out, only to land without an explosion. Leith Fares, a first responder in Idlib, Syria, recalled at first feeling relieved when one of these bombs did not detonate on 16 March 2015. "It is usually good news when there is no explosion", he said in an interview. But when Leith went into the basement of a nearby home to search for survivors, he said, "I felt short of breath, coughed and became dizzy. I could not even take two breaths". In the basement, six members of the Talib family sheltered, with three children ages one, two and three. None had visible wounds. But when the children arrived at the local hospital, the doctor in charge recalled that "they were foaming at the mouth, they were suffocating, then their hearts stopped". Their parents struggled to breathe too before dying from the attack, along with their 65-year-old grandmother.

Think about how it must feel to be suddenly overwhelmed by the sharp smell of chlorine; to think you have escaped death by bombing only to realize you might die by asphyxiation; to wonder how to run from a weapon that you cannot see that is enveloping you on all sides. It is a suffering so gruesome that the international community has resoundingly condemned the use of chemical weapons and established a norm against their use under any circumstances, as enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

So the United States welcomes the Council's unanimous decision to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for another year. The Mechanism is a vital tool for fighting impunity — an independent group of experts with the tools to tell us who is using chemical weapons in Syria, after the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-Finding Mission has determined that chemical weapons were used or were likely used.

The Mechanism's findings are clear. Investigators have concluded that the Al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons against the Syrian people not just in one attack, but in three confirmed attacks so far. That is three confirmed attacks carried out by a Member State of the United Nations; three attacks using weapons that the world concluded decades ago should never be used; three attacks that have caused Syrian men, women and children to suffocate to death. And these are just the attacks for which the Mechanism has to date reached this conclusion. There is credible evidence of many more chemical weapons attacks carried out by the Al-Assad regime. The use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime is a clear violation of Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and under resolution 2118 (2013).

The Mechanism has also confirmed the use of chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Marea. The United States condemns this attack in the strongest terms, as well as all of

the horrific atrocities that ISIL has carried out and continues to carry out against innocent civilians. This is yet another reason this terrorist organization must be defeated and it is one more reason why the United States will continue to lead the efforts of a 67-member coalition against this colossal threat to our collective security. It underscores the need for the Council to address the threat posed by non-State actors like ISIL who have the capacity and the depravity to use chemical weapons again.

Today's resolution allows the Mechanism to continue its work — work that, unfortunately, sadly, is far from finished. The members of the Security Council need the Mechanism to continue its investigation for three main reasons.

First, the Mechanism is the only institution with a mandate to identify those involved in the use of chemicals as weapons. Until the Mechanism was created, the Security Council received briefings in the passive voice — hearing that chemical weapons "were being used" in Syria, but never hearing which parties were using them. It was, honestly, bizarre. If the Council had failed to extend the Mechanism today, we would have been wilfully blinding ourselves to learning the truth about who is responsible for some of the most deplorable crimes imaginable. We would not have been able to uphold a norm against chemical weapons use if, as a Council, we had decided we did not want to know who was using chemical weapons in the first place.

Secondly, evidence suggests that the Mechanism is in fact helping to dissuade actors from using chemical weapons. This is really important. In the 19 months before the Mechanism was established, there were more than 120 allegations of chemical weapons attacks, but in the 15 months after the Mechanism began its work that number has dropped to approximately 35 alleged attacks. Let us be clear — one chemical weapons attack is one too many and is completely unacceptable and worthy of our collective condemnation. We also know that there are other likely causes, as the Syrian regime has established a pattern of using chemical weapons when it is struggling using conventional means; Russia's entry into the war in September 2015 has given Damascus a significant battlefield edge. Perhaps that explains some of the drop in use. But there is no question that perpetrators who know — as they did before 7 August 2015 when the Mechanism was authorized — that they would never be identified, those perpetrators felt a greater sense of impunity than they must feel now. Even if the Mechanism makes only a small difference in keeping the parties from using chemical weapons, it would save lives and help safeguard a crucial global norm. That is well worth the Council's full and sustained support.

Thirdly and finally, there is so much investigative work left for the Mechanism to complete. The Mechanism has so far only been able to make attribution in four of the nine cases that were initially selected for investigation, and new potential cases continue to emerge. For example, there were numerous reports on 10 August and 6 September that Al-Assad regime helicopters dropped barrel bombs with toxic chemicals on neighbourhoods in eastern Aleppo, sickening dozens of Syrians and killing at least five people. As long as the parties to the conflict in Syria use chemical weapons and as long as previous cases can still be investigated, the Council needs to determine who was involved — and we need the Joint Investigative Mechanism to do it.

But the Council's responsibilities do not end once we know the facts. We already know that the Al-Assad regime and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant were involved in chemical attacks. The members of the Council now need to work together to make sure that those who use such gruesome weapons face consequences. There are sharp differences in the Council when it comes to the conflict in Syria; that is clear. But, the unanimous renewal of the mandate reflects one important principle that we share — our unequivocal collective opposition to the use of chemical weapons. That principle led us to adopt resolution 2118 (2013), requiring Syria, whose regime had just carried out a horrific attack, killing at least 1,400 people, to dismantle and destroy its chemical weapons programme under international supervision. That principle led us to create the Joint Investigative Mechanism and to now extend the Mechanism, and it is on the basis of that principle that we should continue to act to hold parties accountable for using chemical weapons against Syrian people.

There is very little in the history of the Syrian conflict that the Security Council has been able to agree upon. Chemical weapons are one such exception to the general rule of Council division. The fact that we can achieve agreement in that narrow but important domain should motivate us. It should motivate us to work harder to stop the slaughter of civilians by other means, and it should motivate us to achieve the political solution that has long eluded the people of Syria, who continue to be attacked in a savage manner to this very day.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I must touch upon events that preceded today's adoption of resolution 2319 (2016). I stress that we are very concerned by the actions of a number of States, seeking to shift consideration of the issue of the competence of the Security Council to the forum of a purely technical international mechanism in the sphere of armaments and non-proliferation, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

I am referring to the anti-Syrian decision of 11 November, pushed through the back door of the OPCW Executive Council of the anti-Syrian decision of 11 November, which will inevitably have a negative impact, both on the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the prospects for its universalization, as well as on the authority of OPCW. All of that took place prior to substantive consideration of the outcomes of the work in the last year of the Joint Investigation Mechanism looking into cases of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Council, which of course created the Mechanism, is accountable to it. It is hard to call that circumstance anything but disrespect for the competencies of the Security Council.

The decision we have just adopted to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigation Mechanism for a year was the outcome of difficult, complex work with the United States on the content of the resolution, and the result of an extensive negotiating marathon between the representatives of the United States and Russia. The document, in view of our priorities of giving the Mechanism mandate broader geographical scope and a clear counter-terrorist direction, was far from self-evident, yet we agreed to adopt it because we also see its strengths.

Russia's sceptical position on the conclusions presented in the Joint InvestigationMechanism's reports, particularly regarding the modalities of its work, is well known. We intend to continue flagging the technical, logistical, legal and procedural aspects of the Mechanism's activities. Without calling into question the professionalism of the members of Ms. Gamba's team, we trust that they will continue to remember their own responsibility and ensure impartial, objective work. We call on the leadership and personnel of the Joint Investigative Mechanism to not bend to what we expect will be vast amounts of pressure from States guided purely by their own geopolitical interests in the Middle East. Our support of the Council's decision to extend the Mechanism's mandate is dictated by the recognition of the acuteness of those increasing challenges, threats and manifestations of chemical terrorism in Syria and neighbouring Iraq, which, if not today or tomorrow, could soon spill over into and beyond the Middle East.

Over the past two years, the Russian Federation has repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community to the abundant evidence of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists and extremist organizations. We have urged our colleagues in the Council to respond appropriately to the resurgence of chemical terrorism in the Middle East. Sadly, all of our initiatives in that respect, including our corresponding draft resolution with our Chinese partners, have been repeatedly blocked. We see the result. Everyone, even the Mechanism, recognizes that terrorists and militants from the armed opposition in that conflict-torn region of the world are making active use of toxic chemicals against Syrian and Iraqi Government troops and peaceful civilians. The terrorists have developed genuine military chemical capabilities, to the extent that they have the technology to synthesize military-grade poisonous substances such as sarin and mustard gas. Former military chemists and foreign specialists are involved in that work. Such facts are even confirmed by the United States intelligence community.

The Mechanism needs to focus fully on the chemical activities of non-State actors, in particular the Islamic State, Jabhat Al-Nusra, the Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki movement, Jaysh Al-Islam, Jaysh Al-Fatah and other armed opposition groups operating in Syria and adjacent countries — which has been highlighted by Damascus in its statements to the Security Council and the OPCW.

Today's resolution gives the necessary mandate to investigate those crimes. What we have on our hands is international terrorism that has already acquired a taste for using nuclear weapons, often with the clearly provocative goal of politically discrediting the Syrian Government. Sadly, once again today we have heard anti-regime statements. The terrorist threat has already acquired global proportions. We once again call on Council members to set aside our political differences and join forces as part of a broad counter-terrorist coalition in order to eradicate this devastating phenomenon.

Mr. Shen Bo (China): China welcomes the Security Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2319 (2016). Our position on the question of chemical weapons is

clear and consistent. We are firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization individual in any circumstances.

China is deeply concerned about and strongly condemns the use of chemical materials as weapons in Syria. China has always called on the Joint Investigative Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations to discharge its duty in accordance with the mandate and in a fair, objective and professional manner. Resolution 2319 (2016) contains many positive elements, including that the Joint Implementation Mechanism, in its future mandate, will give more attention to the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors and will exchange more information with Syria's neighbouring countries.

China hopes that the Joint Investigative Mechanism will, on the basis of the respect of the sovereignty of the countries concerned, strengthen coordination with the Syrian Government to thoroughly investigate the use of chemical weapons so as to unveil the truth. China also hopes that the Council will continue to keep the unity we have seen here on the Syrian chemical-weapons issue so as to play a positive role in the ultimate elimination of chemical weapons in Syria and in the maintenance of peace and security in the country, contribute to the resolution of the Syrian conflict by political means and help with the comprehensive, durable and proper resolution of the situation in Syria.

Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen (France) (*spoke in French*): France welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2319 (2016), which makes it possible to renew the mandate of the joint mechanism for the investigation and attribution of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, known as the Joint Investigative Mechanism, for one year. This is a time of unity on the Syrian issue which deserves to be welcomed and which, beyond our divisions as to the resolution of the conflict, represents a strong signal of our desire to together bring an end to the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Given the latest conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mechanism , which are compelling, confirming the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and by Da'esh, and while other cases of use of chemical agents against the civilian population continue to be reported, it is necessary to allow the Mechanism to continue its work. The gravity of the facts established by the Joint Investigative Mechanism could not leave any room for political divisions. The Security Council established the Mechanism unanimously last year, and it is up to us, out of common agreement, to extend its existence, which is more justified than ever.

It is also a strong signal sent to those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Their crimes will continue to be clearly and rigorously established. We are therefore responding to a requirement of justice and, by ensuring the renewal of the Mechanism, we are sending a message of deterrence to all parties involved in the Syrian conflict. It is also an expression of the recognition of the international community for the remarkable work of the Mechanism.

The renewal of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, the strengthening of its resources and the continuation of its work are necessary. That much is clear, but our action cannot stop there. We cannot tolerate the flagrant violation of the universal standard of banning the use of chemical weapons; otherwise, we would bear the intolerable risk of trivializing such actions.

Given such a serious challenge and given this violation of the non-proliferation regime, the Council must take action. We must draw all the consequences from the conclusions of the reports established by the Mechanism, and we must ensure that these crimes will be subject to judicial proceedings and sanctions. As the French authorities have already said on many occasions, France hopes that the Security Council will be in a position to soon adopt a resolution to punish those responsible for chemical attacks identified by the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2319 (2016) today, which renews the Joint Investigative Mechanism for another year. I pay tribute to Ms. Power for all her efforts and those of her team to bring the Security Council together on such a vital issue.

I would also like to thank the members of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for their tireless work, which has so often been undertaken in very difficult circumstances. We know without a doubt that the Al-Assad regime and Da'esh used toxic chemicals as weapons against civilians in Syria. Because of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, we know that barrel bombs loaded with chlorine were dropped by the regime on unsuspecting men and women and children in Talmenes, Sarmin and Qmenas, that sulfur mustard was used by Da'esh against innocent people of Marea in August last

year, and that those responsible for war crimes remain free and unpunished to this day.

Tragically, there is even more work ahead for the Joint Investigative Mechanism. Despite all our efforts and despite the pledges made by the Syrian regime to destroy all of its stockpiles, these barbaric acts involving chemicals continue. At least four cases are currently being investigated by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), so today's renewal is sadly necessary, and it will allow the Joint Investigative Mechanism to continue its vital work attributing responsibilities for these latest attacks.

It is not enough to know, however, that chemical attacks have occurred, nor is it enough to know who carried them out. What we need now is justice — for the people of Marea, for the people of Talmenes, Sarmin and Qmenas — and with that justice, an end to the impunity that surrounds the perpetrators of those horrific attacks. The OPCW and the Joint Investigative Mechanism have been clear. It is now time for the Security Council to step up and do its part. The continued use of chemicals as weapons is in clear contravention of international norms and laws and in clear violation of numerous resolutions of the Council. If their use does not constitute a threat to international peace and security I do not really know what does.

We therefore have to act. Today we have taken a valuable first step. We have shown welcome unity. We have shown that we can find common purpose on this matter. Let us use this momentum in the coming weeks and months to ensure that those responsible for the use of these weapons finally face justice.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2319 (2016), which extends the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism for a one-year period.

Ukraine commends the Joint Investigative Mechanism's efforts aimed at executing its mandate based on the principles of impartiality, objectivity and independence. Its conclusions have proved the importance of having the Mechanism available in the future, since there are still many cases, including some that took place in 2016, that should be thoroughly investigated. We are also deeply concerned with the continuous allegations of possible illegal possession, movement and intention to use toxic substances as chemical weapons in Syria.

At the same time, the resolution envisages additional tasks for the Joint Investigative Mechanism in the future, in particular investigating the illegal activity of non-State actors. We believe that this change of focus for the Mechanism will not lead to overlooking the primary part of its mandate pursuant to resolution 2235 (2015).

Removing the threat of any use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic is an essential element in creating proper conditions for de-escalating tensions on the ground, tackling extremism and reaching a sustainable political solution to the crisis in a broader context. The international community must have full confidence that Syria has irreversibly abandoned its chemical-weapons programme and that those responsible for organizing and committing horrible crimes using chemical weapons as a means of warfare are held accountable.

Mr. Gasso Matoses (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain supported today the extension of the mandate of the Joint Investigation Mechanism since it considers it fundamental that the Mechanism continue carrying out its work and that, as the Security Council decided in previous resolutions, those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria be held accountable.

The work of the Mechanism is not yet over, and the reality that we face is troubling. New allegations on the use of chemical weapons keeping coming in, and Joint Investigative Mechanism has already shown that it has a deterrent effect that we need to preserve. Spain is particularly pleased that the resolution we have adopted today includes references to cooperation between the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Joint Investigation Mechanism. This is logical since the 1540 (2004) Committee is a subsidiary body of the Council that ensures that non-State actors do not have access to or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons.

Moreover, I trust that this Mechanism will be given adequate resources to carry out the work that we have entrusted to it. I am particularly grateful for the efforts of the United States Mission and the Russian Mission for reaching consensus within the Council once more on this occasion. The unity that the Council has once again shown on this issue is a hopeful sign on which we must build a united and robust Security Council response, one that the citizens of Syria have been waiting for.

Mr. Akahori (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2319 (2016). The resolution is particularly important given that, to our deepest regret, additional allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria have been continuously reported. It is a grave challenge to the international norm of prohibited chemical weapons. We need to firmly uphold that norm. It is critically important in that regard to uncover the whole picture of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria and hold accountable those who are responsible.

The Security Council is sending a strong and clear message by renewing the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism to identify those who are responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Japan is ready to engage in a constructive manner to enable the Mechanism to accomplish its work even more effectively.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt welcomes the adoption of resolution 2319 (2016) by the Council, which extends the mandate of the Joint Investigate Mechanism by an additional year. We pay tribute to the professionalism shown by those responsible for the Mechanism.

On many occasions we have reiterated the importance of maintaining a high level of objectivity and neutrality in order to hold accountable those responsible for the alleged use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians in Syria. It is important to determine the facts concerning the perpetrators who have carried out such crimes in recent years. Our commitment to that path arises from the concern felt in Egypt and other countries in the Middle East regarding the increase in the capabilities of terrorists and non-State actors with foreign support with respect to the manufacture and use of chemical weapons. We are especially concerned about those actors who have not been identified by the Council within the framework of terrorist groups working in Syria despite their well-known terrorist background and records of odious crimes committed against innocent Syrian people. In that framework, we hope to strengthen the role of the Security Council and the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

With respect to the fight against non-State actors who take part in activities related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Security Council must be in a position to determine how those activities are carried out in order to halt the activities of such groups and prevent their participation in future chemical weapons-related activities. The implementation of resolution 2319 (2016) regarding Da'esh, Jabhat al-Nusrah and other terrorist groups, in the context of the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, can be considered an essential development within the framework of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

We hope that the unity showed by the Council in adopting resolution 2319 (2016) can serve as a new impetus to resolve the crisis in Syria in all of its aspects — military, political and humanitarian.

The meeting rose at 9.30 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7816

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7816th meeting
Friday, 18 November 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ndiaye	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Coleman
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union (S/2016/780)

Identical letters dated 22 September 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/809)

Letter dated 10 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/966)

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16-39153 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union (S/2016/780)

Identical letters dated 22 September 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/809)

Letter dated 10 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/966)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; His Excellency Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; Mr. Haile Menkerios, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union; and His Excellency Mr. Donald Kaberuka, African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. João Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of participants to document S/2016/780, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union, as well as to document S/2016/809, which contains identical letters dated 22 September 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council.

I wish to also draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/966, which contains a letter dated 10 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Mr. Wane.

Mr. Wane (*spoke in French*): On behalf of Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, I would like to thank the Senegalese presidency for convening this very timely discussion. I must also admit, as a former staff member of the African Union Commission, where I worked for over 20 years, that I feel particularly honoured and grateful to be able to brief the Security Council on a subject of vital importance not only for Africa but also for our system of collective security. It is an issue on which I have been working diligently throughout my entire career within the African Union (AU), and obviously I feel strongly committed to the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, because I firmly believe that there is no alternative to a close partnership between the two organizations. In the context of my new functions at the United Nations, I am grateful to be able to contribute towards strengthening that partnership. Once again, I thank, you, Mr. Minister, for having taken the initiative of convening this very timely meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to begin by making several statements of fact. First, the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union on peace and security is not new and has grown into a strategic partnership — a stronger partnership based on an innovative and forward-looking reading of Chapter VIII of Charter of the United Nations. Today's debate will, without any doubt, contribute to that partnership. Mr. Ladsous addressed the Security Council during the open debate (see S/PV.7694) last May to measure the progress achieved in strengthening the partnership in the area of peace and security on the continent. That debate took place on the tenth anniversary of the beginning of annual consultations between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council.

The Secretary-General has repeatedly underscored that strengthening global and regional partnerships is absolutely critical, especially in Africa. His report (S/2016/780) on the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, which Special Representative Haile Menkerios will present shortly, is testimony to the mutual efforts made over the years towards building the strategic relationship between the two organizations. The relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council is also of primary importance. I note that both Councils now meet annually in New York and Addis Ababa. While further harmonization of efforts could be still further encouraged, it is unanimously acknowledged that there are plenty of areas of common interest for the African Union and the United Nations to work on together.

The Secretariat and African Union Commission have also enhanced their cooperation at the strategic level — through the Joint Task Force, which meets twice a year, and through the annual desk-to-desk meetings, the next one of which is scheduled for December in Addis Ababa. That also includes monthly director-level video tele-conferences and daily working-level interactions. In an innovative move, AU Peace and Security Council experts will be hosted later this month here at Headquarters by the Secretariat for a familiarization visit, with a view to forging better knowledge and understanding of its internal processes.

My second point follows logically from the partnership to its operational dimension. In that regard, I would like to mention the considerable progress made in the area of operational support, as was already been highlighted by the report (see S/2015/446) of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations. For more than 10 years, strong cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations on planning and supporting peace operations has become the norm. That has included experiences relating to transitions from AU operations to United Nations peacekeeping operations, such as in the Central African Republic and Mali, the joint management of hybrid operations in conjunction with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, and through providing logistical support packages funded through assessed contributions to African Union-led missions, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia.

In assessing the 13-year history of cooperation at the operational level, the September report (S/2016/809) entitled "Report of the joint African Union-United Nations review of available mechanisms to finance and support African Union peace support operations authorized by the United Nations Security Council" provides Member States with the first comprehensive account of mechanisms used in the past and still readily available, as well as more general concluding observations on key lessons learned. I wish to draw the Council's attention to the fact that two out of the five concluding observations from the report relate to the need for the United Nations to adapt to the increasing complexity of the security challenges that the international community is facing, particularly in Africa, either in its own interventions or in support of African Union peace support operations.

I would like to cite several statistics to illustrate the importance of Africa for peacekeeping, and vice versa. Nine out of 16 of the United Nations peacekeeping missions are deployed in Africa. Those missions alone account for 83 per cent of all uniformed personnel and 86 per cent of the financial resources approved for United Nations peacekeeping missions. As of July, African States represented 20 of the top 30 contributors of uniformed personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Approximately 50 per cent of all uniformed peacekeepers come from African Union member States.

This brings me to my third point. The complexity of the current conflicts in Africa and the trends observed highlight the need to strengthen further the United Nations operational cooperation with and in support of African Union peace support operations. In doing so, we ought to be pragmatic and results-oriented, driven, as we should be, by the imperative to respond to the needs on the ground, assist countries and shattered communities to turn the page of violence and conflict, and consolidate peace where it has been achieved.

This, in our view, reinforces the calls made several times in the past by the Council and by the African Union Peace and Security Council to seek ways to ensure predictable, flexible and sustainable financing for African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council.

In his report dated 2 September 2015 on the future of United Nations peace operations (S/2015/682), the Secretary-General commended the African Union's commitment to self-reliance, including to financing 25 per cent of future African Union peace operations. He then urged Member States to give urgent consideration

to how the United Nations can respond to that initiative. On 18 July, the Secretary-General welcomed the historic decision taken by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Kigali, setting out concrete steps towards self-reliance, particularly in relation to the AU peace and security budget.

Today's debate is an opportunity for Member States to initiate a response. In so doing, they will enhance the role of the United Nations and strengthen the regional response.

For our part, we in the Secretariat will continue to work closely with the African Union so as to generate, as much as possible, harmonized approaches between the Secretariat and the Commission. For this purpose, we will naturally rely on our Office to the African Union, which I should like to commend for its central role in strengthening the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations. Having worked with the Office in Addis Ababa in connection with my former responsibilities at the African Union Commission, I can testify to the quality and the strength of the contribution that the Office is making to the relationship between the African Union and the United Nations. Whatever efforts can be made to enhance the capacity and resources of the Commission are of course welcome steps towards a stronger partnership between the two organizations.

It may sometimes seem simpler for each organization to work on its own given the obstacles that may surface as soon as concrete steps towards closer cooperation are contemplated. The tendency has often been to highlight the challenges rather than innovative mechanisms for cooperation, but it is, rather, such innovation that we need to encourage and spur in order to circumvent these challenges.

Whatever the challenges in the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, and this is my final observation, there is in fact no alternative to a stronger partnership. There is now a clear recognition of the fact that no single organization can effectively address on its own the increasingly complex, multifaceted peace and security challenges of today, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report dated January 2012. Our only option is to overcome these challenges. While the United Nations has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the African Union is one of our most important partners in confronting common challenges in Africa. It has also expressed a willingness to play a role in, and has put efforts into, building the peace and security architecture. The path to the future is therefore one of innovation, creativity and pragmatism.

Let me once again sincerely thank Senegal for having convened this meeting and also thank the members of the Council for their continued commitment to a stronger partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in our joint efforts to address the peace and security challenges confronting us on the African continent.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Wane for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, I wish to pay tribute to you, Mr. Minister, for having taken the time to travel to New York in order personally to preside over this important Security Council debate. I should also like to pay tribute to your country, Senegal, whose presidency has focused in particular on the issue of strategic cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations, with specific attention devoted to the African Union (AU).

(*spoke in English*)

Numerous reports have highlighted the fact that the current international peace and security architecture is under significant pressure given the complexity of the peace and security challenges that the world faces today. The complexity of today's crises is likely only to increase, placing ever-greater demands on this architecture. Forging an effective partnership between the United Nations and the African Union is therefore of the greatest strategic importance to our collective security.

The African Union's proven ability to act as first responder is a critical element of the evolving international peace and security architecture. Since the establishment of the Union in 2002, the AU and the subregional organizations have demonstrated a clear comparative advantage in two particular types of situations: first, in missions where offensive operations are needed and the United Nations is unable to deploy forces in a timely manner; and, secondly, where the Security Council is unable to mobilize the requisite political consensus to initiate action. The AU has blazed

a path in its deployment of missions to Burundi, Darfur, Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic.

However, while the AU has the mandate, experience and political will to deploy rapidly in order to deliver in these cases, it is unable to sustain such missions over the medium to long term because it lacks sufficient means. For this reason, in 2015 the African Union Heads of State and Government made a commitment at the twenty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly to finance 25 percent of the cost of AU-led peace-support operations from AU member States' assessed contributions. This decision was reaffirmed at the twenty-fifth ordinary session of the Assembly and culminated in the Assembly's financing decision in July this year, at the Kigali Summit.

Against this background, the AU has consistently argued for predictable and sustainable financing through United Nations assessed contributions for AU-led peace operations that the United Nations cannot itself undertake but that are regarded as critical to the maintenance of international peace and security. The AU's view is that in deploying such missions, it is doing so on behalf of the Security Council, which retains primary responsibility for the maintenance of international security in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

There is general agreement that the current financing arrangements for AU-led peace-support operations are neither reliable nor predictable, especially in the context of high- tempo combat operations. While partners have demonstrated much flexibility and innovation — and I wish to take this opportunity to express the profound appreciation of the African Union for the support of our partners — there is nonetheless a consensus that the current financing arrangements continue to be unsustainable. That is borne out by current experience as partners, facing their own financial pressures back home, are forced to cut back on the support provided, most notably to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

In that respect, the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which are consistent with the Common African Position of the AU itself, are pertinent. In particular, it will be recalled that the HIPPO report (see S/2015/446) recommended that

> "United Nations-assessed contributions be provided on a case-by-case basis to support African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council" (*S/2015/446, para. 249 (a)*).

It should be noted that the joint African Union-United Nations review of available mechanisms to finance and support AU peace-support operations authorized by the Security Council concluded that access to United Nations-assessed contributions had provided a reliable, predictable and sustainable means of financing AU peace-support operations. From that perspective, we can all agree that it is critical that African Union peace-support operations authorized by the Security Council be given the necessary support to effectively address increasingly complex mandates in increasingly challenging environments. The evidence also shows that both the United Nations and the AU have already shown considerable innovation and pragmatism in identifying modalities to provide financial and materiel support to AU missions, including through assessed contributions in specific cases. It also shows that access to United Nations-assessed contributions provides the greatest predictability and sustainability for certain types of missions.

Agreement on the principle that United Nations-assessed contributions could be made available to support United Nations-authorized AU-led peace-support operations is therefore not a new proposition. It is already being implemented in the case of AMISOM, albeit in an ad hoc and partial manner. The fact that we are having this debate on that critical question today demonstrates that there is the strategic imperative and the collective political will to move away from ad hoc financing arrangements to a partnership based on greater predictability, mutual accountability and the two organizations' respective authorities, competencies and capacities. The detailed proposals in the report of the AU High Representative for the Peace Fund, known as the Kaberuka report, provide a solid foundation for the evolution of the strategic AU-United Nations partnership in the area of peacekeeping.

This is a necessary evolution that will only enhance the overall effectiveness of our international peace and security architecture. We appreciate and recognize the fact that there is much detail to be worked out over the coming months, and we are confident that our two institutions can quickly establish a joint process to develop more detailed implementation modalities to move us towards a substantive framework draft resolution on predictable financing for AU-led peace-support operations in 2017. We will need

to think deeply about the nature of the missions that could benefit from that type of support from the United Nations. It is clear that broader partnerships will still be required to support the AU in that complex area, but the AU-United Nations partnership will remain a central pillar.

I would like to conclude by encouraging all Council members to support the adoption of the draft resolution under consideration, which, among other things, expresses the Security Council's willingness to consider how such a partnership could be realized and identifies the tasks to be completed by the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission to take the process forward. We also wish to recall that this is an issue that has been on the agenda of the African Union since 2007, having emerged initially through the difficult experience of the African Union Mission in the Sudan, which had to transition into the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur as a result of the AU lacking the funds to sustain the Mission.

Experience has clearly shown that the lack of financial support for AU missions has had a direct impact on the overall success of those missions and subsequent United Nations missions, since the AU is forced to transition to United Nations missions prematurely. Greater predictability would allow the AU to properly stabilize the situation before handing matters over to a United Nations mission, which could be in the best interests of the AU, the United Nations and peace and security in general.

The international system is going through a period of profound reassessment, as old certainties are being questioned and new fault lines of conflict emerge, linked to growing inequality, migration, climate change and governance issues, among other things. The United Nations cannot, on its own, adequately respond to those challenges; therefore, partnerships with regional organizations such as the African Union will only grow in importance. It is therefore vital that we work to ensure that together we put in place the appropriate architecture to meet those weighty challenges.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. António for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Menkerios.

Mr. Menkerios: I would like to begin by expressing, on behalf of the Secretary-General, my profound appreciation to the Senegalese presidency of the Security Council for convening this important debate on the topic of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security, including the African Union (AU). The presence at this debate of His Excellency Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, is an illustration of the importance that your country, Sir, and the Security Council attach to the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union.

In September, the Secretary-General issued his first report (S/2016/780) on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union. In that report, the Secretary-General notes that

> "[t]here is an urgent need for new and stronger ways to address international peace and security challenges. Stronger partnerships with regional organizations, in particular with the African Union, can enable us to respond early, swiftly, coherently and decisively to prevent and manage conflict." (*S/2016/780, para. 58*)

On 29 September, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held a briefing on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, which I was invited to address on behalf of the Secretary-General, and the Peace and Security Council subsequently issued a communiqué that welcomed the report of the Secretary-General and commended the significant progress achieved in the AU-United Nations partnership in the past five years. In order to strengthen it further, the Peace and Security Council called for a more systematic, predictable and strategic partnership between the two organizations.

It should also be recalled that the Security Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly called for stronger engagement between the United Nations, the African Union and the regionaleconomic communities in conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa. Indeed, the principle of partnership with regional organizations is enshrined in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. Article 3 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union also encourages international cooperation, taking due account of the Charter of the United Nations.

As the Council is well aware, the conflicts that we face in Africa today have grown in scale and complexity, thereby posing a greater threat to international peace and security. Those conflicts cause intolerable loss of life and widespread destruction of resources, desperate humanitarian situations and unimaginable human suffering. We have witnessed the erosion of political and civic rights, while economies regress and social development gains are reversed.

Terrorism and violent extremism, transnational organized crime, piracy and other threats to maritime security, as well as threats caused by weak or ineffective governance institutions, electoral disputes and political and economic exclusion, are some of the challenges that African countries face. Poverty, unemployment, demographic pressures and climate change are also increasingly having an impact on their peace and security.

Dealing with such complex threats is not an easy feat. While the Security Council has the ultimate responsibility for international peace and security and has invested greatly in addressing those threats in Africa, and the AU and its regional economic communities continue to exert every effort to do the same on the continent, it is clear that neither the United Nation, nor the AU or the regional economic communities can address those threats by acting separately. Collaboration between the United Nations and the AU and the communities is an absolute necessity.

Increased collaboration between the United Nations, the AU and regional economic communities in addressing conflicts throughout the past decade has produced a large body of practice, particularly in the area of peace operations and mediation. I am pleased to note that the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission are making good progress in strengthening cooperation and collaboration between the two organizations.

We have better coordinated interventions, for instance in the Sudan and South Sudan, where the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, led by former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, has ably led mediation efforts with the support of the United Nations Special Envoy and many other partners. Another example is Burundi, where both the United Nations and the African Union support the efforts of the East African Community facilitator, former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania.

In addition, we have daily working-level interactions, weekly and monthly meetings at various levels, including via a video teleconference link between both headquarters, and the Joint Task Force of senior United Nations Secretariat and African Union Commission leadership twice a year.

In peace-support operations, the United Nations continues to support the African Union Commission's efforts to manage and operationalize African-led peace operations mandated by the African Union Peace and Security Council and authorized by the United Nations Security Council. They range from the African Union's engagement in Somalia to the Multinational Joint Task Force initiative against Boko Haram and the Regional Task Force's engagement against the Lord's Resistance Army. Our collaboration also includes supporting the AU as the first responder in crises such as those in the Central African Republic and Mali.

A review of the United Nations-African Union partnership so far, which is characterized by an expanding series of ad hoc collaborative engagements, amply demonstrates that it is time that the two organizations move towards a more structured, systematic and predictable partnership — in short, a strategic partnership. We should not have to reinvent the wheel every time we face a new conflict on the continent. A structured, systematic and predictable partnership would mean that mechanisms are in place and working in both organizations to ensure joint early and continuous engagement, from early warning and conflict prevention to mediation and peace-support operations to post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Instead of the two organizations engaging in a series of ad hoc engagements, they would need to adopt predictable and structured processes to address threats to international peace and security in the continent, based on common principles and burden-sharing that takes into account comparative advantages.

I must emphasize the value of the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission undertaking joint assessment and analysis of emerging and current conflict situations, developing coherent strategies for conflict prevention or any other form of conflict management or resolution and providing the relevant facts, interpretations and proposals to the two Councils. The two Councils are, as a result, more

likely to decide on common approaches that promote collaborative engagement.

Although the Security Council will always address each conflict on a case-by-case basis, there is more that the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission can do to bring a level of predictability and sustainability to managing peace operations in this manner. The conclusion of a joint framework for enhanced partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, which already exists in draft form, can potentially institutionalize and further strengthen the strategic partnership between the two organizations.

The United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council of course play pivotal roles in strengthening the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in the area of peace and security. There has been significant progress over the past few years in strengthening collaboration between the two Councils. The tenth consultative meeting between the two Councils, held in New York in May, provided an opportunity for a constructive and candid exchange of views.

The recent joint meeting of the Councils to discuss South Sudan, which took place in September in Addis Ababa, is also an indication of the progress that has been made over the past few years. The three African members of the Security Council play an important role in strengthening and facilitating Security Council and African Union Peace and Security Council relations. I firmly believe that, if the two organizations were to adopt a structured and predictable partnership, that would tremendously facilitate and enhance such engagement.

The decisions of the African Union Summit in Kigali in July on financing the AU and the Peace Fund should provide the means for Africa to finance a greater share of its conflict-prevention and mediation initiatives, as well as peace-support operations. I strongly believe that the implementation of those proposals will strengthen the United Nations-African Union partnership, because a stronger African Union will be a more effective partner for the United Nations.

The 2016 African Union Summit decisions on financing must therefore be welcomed and positively responded to within the context of the strategic partnership proposed. Predictable and sustainable funding remains a major challenge for the African Union, particularly in the three focus areas of the Peace Fund, namely, conflict prevention, capacity-building and peace operations. The adoption of a strategic partnership and the implementation of AU proposals in that context would enable the United Nations and the African Union to engage more effectively and exercise our comparative advantages so as to address conflicts and sustain peace in Africa.

Importantly, the proposals on financing the AU and the Peace Fund also envisage a governance mechanism for the Peace Fund to ensure strong accountability and management systems, which are necessary in order to build the confidence of African Union member States and partners. The Finance Ministers of the African Union have decided on an implementation phase for those proposals throughout 2017. While the full details are still being outlined, we believe we should commend the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government for their political commitment, and be prepared to provide technical support, as required and if requested.

The United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) is the conduit through which the United Nations can enhance the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union in peace and security matters. Under the guidance of the Secretary-General and in collaboration with the United Nations departments responsible for peace and security, UNOAU will continue its close interaction with the African Union Commission and AU member States, so as to build understanding and enhance communication between the two organizations. As stated earlier, UNOAU will also continue to conduct joint horizon-scanning exercises and develop joint analysis and early warning with the AU, with a view to developing common understanding and action on conflict-prevention, mediation and peacekeeping. UNOAU will also continue to support the institutional strengthening of the AU Commission, as required, so as to make the partnership more effective and assist the AU in delivering on its mandates for the common purpose.

Strengthening the partnership requires intensifying our day-to-day engagement aimed at sharing views and analyses, seeking common understanding of the issues and developing proposals for joint or coordinated action to address them. It involves reaching out to the whole of the United Nations and the African Union in order to ensure that both organizations draw on all

the relevant contributions and, as much as possible, ensure coherence. We look forward to the continued support of the Security Council to ensure that UNOAU is adequately resourced so that it can effectively fulfil its mandate. The Secretary-General stated in his report on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union, that he plans

> "to conduct an assessment of United Nations-African Union cooperation, including the structure and resource capacity of the UNOAU to meet the growing demands of the partnership." (*S/2016/780, paragraph 57*)

We call on the Council to support his plan.

I wish to thank you once again, Mr. President, for convening this meeting and for inviting us to make this statement. Through you, Sir, we thank all Security Council members for their continued commitment to peace and security in Africa and for their support for our common effort. I also wish to place on record our appreciation to the AU Commission, specifically the Peace and Security Department and the Political Affairs Department, for their strong and steadfast support to the consolidation of our practical collaboration.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Kaberuka.

Mr. Kaberuka: It is an honour and a privilege to be here for this important debate. I would like to thank the presidency of Senegal and His Excellency Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, for his leadership. I thank the membership of the Council for the invitation to make a contribution with a special emphasis on the emerging architecture of the African Union (AU) for financing peace and security.

Peace and stability is the prerequisite for socioeconomic development in a continent that has begun to turn a corner and has demonstrated a new dynamism after years of economic decline. Several speakers have already referred to a number of high-level reports that have established three very important facts. First, the crises that the world faces today are often so complex that no one single organization is able to provide the needed response. Secondly, regional organizations bring a comparative advantage to the table. Thirdly, there is a need for financing mechanisms that are predictable and sustainable, rather than voluntary and ad hoc. A well-funded African Peace and Security Architecture is not simply an African priority, it is a global strategic imperative.

When the African Union came into being it was determined to address the root causes of conflicts, and it instituted a Peace and Security Architecture to that end. It also adopted a vision to silence the guns by 2020. However, even long before that, the Organization of African Unity, the precursor to the African Union, had put in place a mechanism to finance its peace activities, mainly in the form of upstream preventive diplomacy and, occasionally, a few stabilization missions pending the maturation of a global response.

That was the idea behind the setting up of the Peace Fund established over 20 years ago in 1993. That was the time when Africa was beginning to confront major crises, to which the global community was not always in a position to respond in a timely manner. Nonetheless, despite the goodwill, the deep economic crises of the day and the proliferation of crises in subsequent years led to a situation where the Fund fell short of its objectives. The limited resources of the Fund were quickly overwhelmed by the needs, thereby hampering the organization's ability to manage continental peace and security priorities.

It is opportune here to highlight and appreciate the support provided by the international community, bilateral partners, regional organizations and the United Nations, as well as the innovative ways in which that was done, including through United Nations-managed trust funds. There have sometimes been frustrations on both sides, and lessons have been learned that will no doubt inform the future.

Early this year, the leadership of the African Union appointed a Special Envoy with the mandate to develop ideas and proposals on how the African Union could revitalize the Peace Fund. As that Envoy, I was requested to put forward ideas on how the facility could be funded, structured and governed for the challenges of today in a much more predictable way that would avoid overreliance on multiple unpredictable funding channels. It is important to emphasize that, while the Union's members were seeking to undertake that initiative in a spirit of greater ownership and reduced dependence on ad hoc voluntary and unpredictable external sources, they also conceived of the Fund as

a means to strengthen and provide the international community with a more effective tool for partnerships.

At the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government held in Kigali in July, the Union's leadership deliberated on the revitalization of the Peace Fund and took a number of key decisions. The conclusions reached were by consensus and sought to reflect the principles of self-reliance, solidarity, ability to pay, equitable burden-sharing, greater compliance and predictability. The Fund will focus on four main priorities: first, on preventive diplomacy, as experience has shown that that is by far the most cost-effective way to maintain peace, which in the case of the AU would be around $35 million per year, a modest but very effective expenditure; secondly, on institutional capacity to address institutional gaps in the implementation of the Fund, estimated at $30 million per year; thirdly, on peace-support operations, when that becomes necessary and appropriate and as approved by the competent AU organs; and, fourthly, on a crisis-reserve facility to enable the AU to respond to the rapid onset of crises in a timely manner.

I want to emphasize that it is on the third priority — peace-support operations — and that priority alone that the AU is seeking support and cooperation from the United Nations through assessed contributions for Security Council-authorized, but AU-led, operations. A number of scenarios were considered as to what financial commitment that translates into, given the unpredictable nature of such undertakings. Those scenarios are being shared with the competent United Nations and AU administrative organs. African Union members fully appreciate that getting the Fund fully operational is a complex task at the technical, administrative and political levels. Nevertheless, that task is under way. An implementation mechanism is in place, led by 10 Finance Ministers. We have agreed to phase in the mechanism, using 2017 as a transition year, so as to allow countries to go through the legal, fiscal and institutional mechanisms and to ensure compliance with national requirements and international obligations.

As far as cooperation with the United Nations is concerned, both sides appreciate that there is much work to be done by both organizations to refine the ways in which that cooperation should be realized, including the consideration of a number of scenarios to define, first, what the 25 per cent African contribution would imply and, secondly, under what conditions the 75 per cent United Nations contributions would be requested. Both the African Union and the United Nations fully appreciate what that would mean in terms of the administrative, fiduciary and governance angles, including full compliance with AU and United Nations norms as well as international obligations.

The recent joint review by the two organizations has provided further lessons for reflection. There is a need for further innovation and mutual learning. However, African countries are determined to take ownership of the maintenance of peace and stability on the continent. Today the world faces threats that cannot be confined to a particular geographical area, and it is critical to have all hands on deck. The African Peace Fund provides a robust mechanism and unified governance and reporting lines to deal with the numerous channels that complicate accountability and the frameworks that raise transaction costs and reduce effectiveness for all. As the United Nations Security Council considers a strengthened partnership between the two organizations, I hope members will agree that the revitalized AU Peace Fund provides a more coherent framework and a more articulated instrument, through which the continent of Africa and its friends in the international community can work together to promote the cause of peace and stability in Africa and the world.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kaberuka for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad.

We have gathered once again to review the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU). We remain convinced of the importance of the strategic partnership, which covers our mutual efforts aimed at maintaining peace and security in Africa. Based on that conviction, the President of the Republic of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, felt that the matter of strengthening the partnership should be a priority item on the Security Council's agenda during the Senegalese presidency this month.

Today's debate therefore enables us to reflect on how best to use that cooperation so as to meet the current challenges. That leads me to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations El-Ghassim Wane, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations Téte António, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union Haile Menkerios, as well as the African Union

High Representative for the Peace Fund, Mr. Donald Kaberuka, for their very relevant briefings, which have strongly highlighted the challenges linked to strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. I would also like to welcome the continuous commitment of the United States and France to assist African States in seeking solutions to the security challenges facing the continent.

The need to bolster cooperation between regional and subregional organizations, in particular the African Union, has been one of the joint recommendations to come out of the various reviews aimed at making United Nations peacekeeping operations more effective. As a strategic partner of the United Nations in the areas of peace and security, the African Union has demonstrated its determination and ability to act as a first responder to African crises. Indeed, the African Union has shown its willingness and ability to provide primary responses to the crises proliferating on the African continent.

That means that the African Union has become a major player in collective security and is, furthermore, endeavouring to create a structure for collective security and to strengthen that security by way of the African Peace and Security Architecture, which is a comprehensive tool that seeks in particular to prevent, combat and manage conflicts on the continent. Establishing the African Peace and Security Architecture represents a symbolic expression of the African Union's genuine desire to tackle issues of peace and security on the continent. That intention is clear, in spite of the number and scope of the difficulties to overcome, and is demonstrated by the adoption of the AU Road Map 2016-2020, which seeks, among other things, to prevent and remove obstacles impeding the full functioning of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

The peacekeeping operations of the African Union are local responses to global challenges. Enhancing the partnership between the United Nations and the AU would therefore certainly assist the AU in acquiring the appropriate means to conduct effective action, which is in everyone's best interests. In that regard, strengthening the partnership at the strategic and operational levels is necessary for greater synergy and coherence, in the light of the evolving security challenges facing the African continent.

Analysis indicates that, since its effective implementation in 2004, the AU Peace and Security Council, as well as the mechanisms of the African Peace and Security Architecture, have been active in various crises, in particular those in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Comoros, Darfur and Somalia. However, their actions are often limited by various constraints, especially the crucial issue of financing. The African Union is currently shouldering greater responsibility for peace and security on the continent, and it is troubling to note that the absence of predictable and sustainable financing hampers the potential of the institution.

On that matter, in document S/2015/682, entitled, "The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on peace operations", the Secretary-General acknowledged, and rightly so, that the growing responsibilities of the African Union and the regional economic communities, as well as regional mechanisms, in peace and security are a significant human and financial burden for African countries. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau is relatively symptomatic of the type of difficulties that regional and subregional organizations face in securing predictable and sustainable financing. I thank the European Union for its invaluable contribution to the activities of that ECOWAS Mission.

The constraints I just mentioned point to the need to define the channels and ways to share the burden. In other words, the United Nations should better support the laudable efforts of the African Union in handling the crucial issue of the financing of peacekeeping operations, as well as in ensuring the operation of its Peace and Security Architecture. With that in mind, Senegal believes that the United Nations should invest and play a more active role in ensuring the success of African Union activities, as a strategic partner to assist in finding often urgent solutions to shared concerns. That requires, among other things, greater support to the peacekeeping operations of the African Union that are endorsed by the Security Council, as well as through more predictable financing. That type of approach is particularly appropriate, as the African Union has resolutely committed to making significant headway in resolving the issue of predictable financing by committing to providing 25 per cent of peacekeeping operation costs. The African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund has just recalled that those recommendations were adopted during the twenty-seventh Assembly ofHeads of State and

Government of the African Union, held in Kigali in July. Such laudable efforts must not be in vain. I would like to hope that draft resolution S/2016/977, which we are to adopt following this debate, will provide a solid foundation for definitively settling the crucial issue of financing for peacekeeping operations in African Union countries. We are further encouraged by the fact that the draft resolution rightly welcomes the efforts of the African Union to bring its contribution to 25 per cent for peacekeeping operations. That is a strong political message from the Security Council to the African Union, expressing the Council's readiness as it moves in that direction. It offers genuine prospects to better reflect on the best way to ensure lasting and predictable financing for peacekeeping operations in African Union countries.

To conclude, my delegation would like to welcome the issuance of the Secretary-General's report in document S/2016/809, on the United Nations-African Union joint review of existing financing and support mechanisms for African Union peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council. The conclusions of the report stress the importance of access to assessed contributions as a way of providing reliable, predictable and sustainable financing to cover the support costs of African Union peacekeeping operations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola) (*spoke in French*): It is quite a pleasure to have the Foreign Minister of Senegal here to preside over this meeting of the Security Council to guide and shape our discussions on a matter that occupies a unique place within the deliberations of the Council and is, of course, a matter of great importance to Africa.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to begin by commending Senegal and the Senegalese presidency for convening this debate on strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and African Union on peace and security. We thank the briefers, namely, Mr. El-Ghassim Wane, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Mr. Haile Menkerios, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union; Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Mr. Donald Kaberuka, African Union High Representative for the Peace Fund. Their comments, remarks and proposals have very much enriched our debate this morning on a theme that is very dear to the African continent and to the entire global community, given the threats to peace and security facing the world.

The contemporary and evolving challenges posed by violent conflict, humanitarian crises, extremism, terrorism, war crimes and crimes against humanity call for a more coordinated response and complementary action on the part of all stakeholders in addressing issues related to peace and security at the international and regional levels. In that regard, cooperation between the African Union (AU) and the United Nations based on a shared vision, goals and comparative advantages plays a critical role in tackling the numerous conflicts on the African continent.

The Council has just returned from a mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where members of the Council were able to personally observe the challenges that we face, and I think that the debate this morning will provide valuable insights into what we are called upon to do. The Addis Ababa Declaration of 2006, which established a 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union, provided the basis for cooperation between the two organizations and the establishment of an institutional framework, inter alia, the United Nations Office to the African Union, the annual joint consultative meetings, African non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council coordination group, the joint framework between the United Nations and the Peace and Security Department of the African Union, and the Joint Task Force on Peace and Security. Important Council resolutions have been adopted, in particular resolutions 2023 (2011) and 2067 (2012), which seek to strengthen the relationship between the two organizations and develop a more effective partnership. Those were positive developments that we are now called upon to refine by improving the mechanisms established, and the debate today provides a unique opportunity to enhance our joint responsibility to render our cooperation more effective.

In that connection, bearing in mind the need to further develop the relationship from a level based on cooperation to one consisting of a strategic partnership, the Assembly of the African Union adopted a decision in July 2015 to establish the 2017-2028 framework for a renewed partnership on Africa's integration and development agenda, based on, among other provisions, the guiding principles of African ownership

and leadership. The agenda is built upon important and strategic policy decisions taken by the African Union, namely, Agenda 2063, which is aimed at creating the conditions for the sustainable development of the African continent, and Vision 2020, which together provide the AU framework to put an end to all conflicts on the continent by 2020.

In its fiftieth anniversary solemn declaration, the AU proclaimed the need for a stronger commitment by African States to efforts to address conflicts on the continent and to review their policies on peace and security. The African Union member States have expressed a clear commitment to engage in peacekeeping missions with robust mandates aimed at deterring violence and, if necessary, enforcing peace. That endeavour can be achieved only with close coordination and complementarity with the United Nations and the Security Council, given the Council's premier responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security. In 2015, we adopted the African Peace and Security Architecture Roadmap for the period 2016 to 2020, which is a strategic blueprint putting particular emphasis on effective delivery by all stakeholders involved in the peace and security architecture, including partners and external actors. The Roadmap aims at covering the various phases of the conflict cycle through five strategic priorities: conflict prevention, conflict management, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, strategic security issues and coordination and partnership. The central question remains: How can the United Nations Security Council support the successful implementation of those priorities?

The United Nations went through a review of peacekeeping operations. The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations presented a comprehensive report (see S/2015/446), regarding which the African Union was extensively consulted by the Panel, and the AU was given an opportunity to lay out its common position focused on priorities, including crisis management by regional institutions, a recognition of the Security Council's primacy in authorizing enforcement action, the need for permanent consultations and exchanges of information relating to ongoing crises and conflicts, and the need for better coordination and the strengthening of complementarities.

In the search for African solutions to the conflicts affecting the continent, given the unprecedented threats faced by some African countries and the delays in the operationalization of the African Standby Force, which was initially due to global events of 2008, some AU member States launched discussions on the establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis, so as to provide the African continent with the means to ensure their ownership in tackling conflict situations on the continent and capabilities for immediately responding to crises.

In finalizing those strategic operational decisions based on African Union-led experiences, some common denominators became apparent: first, the joint commitment by the AU and the United Nations to strengthen their strategic partnership on issues related to peace and security, and, secondly, the need to explore options for ensuring predictable, reliable and sustainable funding for peace-support operations in the continent. Angola commends the AU Peace Fund report entitled "Securing predictable and sustainable financing for peace in Africa".

On the long road towards finding more appropriate responses to the unprecedented threats to peace and security globally, particularly in Africa, considering the need for predictable funding in order to ensure peacekeeping operations in Africa, the High Representative of the AU Peace Fund, who is present here this morning, has presented a commendable proposal that the Council has been called upon to consider.

We reiterate our support for the draft resolution (S/2016/977) to be adopted shortly. We look forward to options on the operationalization of the commitments by the African Union and the outcomes of today's discussion on the issue and the follow-up action by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, as well as later on by the African Union Summit to be convened in January in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Senegalese delegation for having convened today's debate. I also wish to thank Messrs. Wane, Antonio, Menkerios and Kaberuka for their briefings.

Bearing in mind that the Security Council continues to focus most of its attention on responding to issues that threaten peace and security in the African continent, there is clearly a need to consolidate and strengthen the operational and strategic links between the two multilateral forums, that is, the United Nations and the African Union (AU), so as to enable the United

Nations-AU partnership to flourish and bear fruit on the basis of mutual respect.

My country recognizes the key role played by the African Union in the peaceful settlement of disputes in Africa as part of the AU 2063 Agenda and the African Peace and Security Architecture 2016-2020 Roadmap. Against that backdrop, it is essential that the Security Council grant a larger role to the African Union in measures involving the African continent. Unfortunately, we have noted with concern a tendency within the Council to apply measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, rather than giving priority to Chapters VI and VIII.

We therefore call upon the Council to address conflict situations in Africa in a balanced manner, based on peaceful measures for settling disputes, and to include the African Union's participation in such efforts. Ongoing interference in the domestic affairs of African countries is a key factor in the destabilization and conflict that we see in the continent. It is unfortunate that the national interests of some Council members in situations involving some countries and conflicts in Africa have transformed the Council into a body for meddling and exerting pressure. As an example, I would note the precipitate action taken in 2011 in the form of coercive measures in Libya under Chapter VII of the Charter. That was carried out despite mediation efforts already undertaken by the African Union to address the situation. However, those efforts were ignored by the Council.

Five years later, we are still witnessing the serious consequences that resulted from the Council's misguided decision and from errors on the part of the international community in Libya. Foreign intervention led to the destruction of that State's institutions, as well as to the current instability in North Africa. Together with other factors, that intervention contributed to the growing presence of violent groups, as well as terrorism, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, and human trafficking, and has transformed the Mediterranean Sea into an enormous, bloody burial ground for thousands of migrants.

It is therefore paradoxical that, while the African Union is a key partner of the United Nations in peace and security matters, we are not taking its assessments and views into account on relevant items that are discussed in the Council, such as the issues of Western Sahara and the migrant crisis. We recall that Venezuela abstained in the Council's adoption of resolution 2240 (2015) (see S/PV.7531), concerning the migrant crisis, because the resolution did not take into account the concerns of the African countries that are the most affected by the issue. The Observer of the African Union was not even allowed to participate in the debate, and Chapter VII of the Charter was invoked to address a multidimensional problem that continues to affect the African population.

In the case of Western Sahara we have seen refusals on the part of some Council members to allow the Permanent Representative of the African Union for Western Sahara to address the Council. I believe that it is worth recalling that resolution 690 (1991) confers upon the African Union a key role to play in supporting the United Nations as a facilitator in Western Sahara and in supervising the referendum for the self-determination of Western Sahara, the last remaining colony in Africa.

In the light of all that, the relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council needs to be improved and strengthened. That is one of the key points made as part of the 2015 broad analysis of peace operations and of the peacekeeping architecture. Moreover, we highly value the progress made in peacekeeping operations, the exceptional role of the United Nations Office to the African Union, and United Nations support to regional organizations in policy development and guidance and training in areas such as security-sector reform, post-conflict reconstruction, women and peace and security, the protection of civilians, including children, and preventing and combatting sexual and gender-based violence. It is our hope that those key aspects of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union will be strengthened in the future.

We need to make greater headway in strengthening the link between our two organizations and in developing the holistic and common strategies needed to respond to the emerging challenges in Africa, based on mutual responsibilities and comparative advantages, with a view to achieving bettercoordination and synergy between the two bodies. We also look forward to the speedy adoption of a United Nations-African Union framework for an enhanced partnership for peace and security. We have also taken note of the African Union commitment to contributing 25 per cent of the financing of peace support operations in the region, which is an important step towards ensuring the predictable, sustainable and flexible support and funding that peace operations require.

In conclusion, it is important to support the role played by regional and subregional organizations in finding peaceful and political solutions to conflicts, as well as preventing them and coordinating efforts to maintain and consolidate peace. In any case, it is clear that outside interference is pernicious and unacceptable, that the Security Council alone cannot address challenges to peace and security in Africa, and that the African Union must be recognized as a legitimate political authority in the region. The relationship between the Security Council and the African Union must therefore focus on strengthening the strategic alliance between both entities in order to address conflicts and uphold peace in Africa.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I would like to thank Mr. Ndiaye for convening today's meeting on an important subject and to acknowledge Senegal's role as one of the most significant contributors to United Nations peacekeeping forces. I thank Assistant Secretary-General Wane, Ambassador António, Special Representative Menkerios and Mr. Kaberuka for their briefings, which have conveyed a clear and consistent set of messages for the Council to consider. New Zealand looks forward to the Council's adoption later this morning of draft resolution S/2016/977, prepared by Senegal and the United States, which we believe will send a strong signal of the Security Council's political support and encouragement of the recent efforts of the African Union (AU) to strengthen our partnership.

Over the past two decades, the States members of the African Union have demonstrated their willingness and intention to lead the way in preventing and resolving conflict and securing peace in their region. Effective cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union is essential to ensure support for those efforts and to maximize their chances of success. As others have said, it is therefore critical that the United Nations and the African Union take a structured, complementary and integrated approach to tackling peace and security challenges on the continent.

Various models for such cooperation have been tested, with varying degrees of success. In Somalia, we have seen an African-led peace operation, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), operate with support from bilateral donors, backed by a United Nations support office. In Darfur, we have seen a hybrid United Nations-AU force achieve some progress, but it has also encountered serious challenges in implementing its mandate. Those missions have enjoyed some success, and we pay tribute to those who have contributed to that. But they have also highlighted some of the ongoing challenges facing United Nations-AU cooperation, particularly where arrangements for financing, logistical support and mission leadership are concerned. The missions initially led by the African Union in Mali and the Central African Republic are also a clear case in point.

Although different in nature, the case of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin also demonstrated the need for a model that can enable a more robust response to critical security threats, such as that posed by Boko Haram to the countries of that region. In the case of AMISOM, despite the success of the United Nations logistical-support package, troop-contributing countries in the region continue to be frustrated by the lack of predictable financing for troop stipends. Such approaches are neither sufficient nor sustainable, which is why New Zealand welcomes Senegal's initiative in focusing attention on that critical issue today.

Over the past decade, we have all made obeisance to the need for cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations. It is time to move beyond the rhetoric of cooperation to arrangements that will have practical, meaningful application and deliver concrete results. I want to focus today on three specific areas where the United Nations-AU partnership should be strengthened.

First, we should foster shared analysis and understanding of security challenges between the United Nations and the African Union. We share the view of Special Representative Menkerios that early engagement on building a common analysis and understanding of security challenges and conflict situations creates an essential foundation for effective cooperation. If the United Nations and the African Union — and for that matter the regional economic communities — can agree on objective analyses of the fundamental causes and drivers of conflict, decisions on possible responses, solutions and respective roles should flow more naturally. But how can we achieve that? Secretariat-to-secretariat connections are critical. The United Nations Office to the African Union plays a vital role in United Nations engagement with the African Union, and should be further strengthened. Joint assessment missions, information exchanges, training and secondments are also useful tools for

building connections, mutual trust and understanding between the two secretariats.

Enhanced cooperation between the executive bodies of the two organizations — the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council — is also very important. New Zealand recognizes the significance of regular, structured, formal exchanges between the Councils, such as their annual joint meeting. But we believe that it is much more useful to have regular informal engagement between the two bodies, and that will deliver greater value. In our experience, such interactions have been most successful when they focus on specific issues, often after field missions, when the two bodies can focus on what has been achieved and what the problems are, rather than the areas where each believes that the other is letting it down. Greater use of joint visiting missions would be another practical way to enable the two Councils to gain a shared appreciation of situations and lend their combined weight to joint political messaging on what is required. We urge the African Union and the Security Council, including next year's incoming members, to make greater use of joint visiting missions in 2017.

Secondly, we must work together to help strengthen the relevant capacities in the African Union. If we are to deepen cooperation, it is essential to ensure that the African Union and the United Nations share standards and approaches for key aspects of their field missions. In addition to due-diligence requirements for human rights in peace operations, we should think through other challenging and complex issues, such as standards for conduct and discipline, financial controls, resource management and environmental standards. That will require significant effort in building relevant capabilities within the AU. What the United Nations will get in return is a stronger partner able to help tackle shared challenges, often significantly more cheaply than the United Nations can.

Thirdly, as we have already heard today, we must tackle the fundamental issue of financing for African-led peace operations. New Zealand acknowledges the challenges involved in reaching agreement on a new, more sustainable financing model in the current environment of austerity. But continuing to rely on ad hoc arrangements each time a new African Union-led mission is deployed is simply not sustainable. Time and again, we have found ourselves reliant on temporary fixes and improvised arrangements in order to mobilize and sustain a response to critical security threats. That often leads to critical delays in establishing a mission and to ongoing capability gaps and uncertainties around funding. The result is less effective missions and longer, more costly conflicts. Finding a mechanism for providing sustained, predictable financing for African-led peace operations is therefore an urgent priority. That is why we strongly support the proposals put forward by the African Union to address the issue, particularly the road map outlined by Mr. Kaberuka whereby 25 per cent of the cost of African Union-led peace operations would be financed by African States. We are also supportive of proposals to utilize United Nations assessed contributions for financing African Union-led missions in defined circumstances.

We realize that those are ambitious proposals. Moreover, we understand what would have to be put in place as prerequisites for making them work. Meeting such challenges will need to be a priority for the new leadership of the United Nations and African Union, when they assume office next year. In the meantime, Member States will need to take the difficult decisions necessary to advance the partnership with the African Union in a meaningful way.

Ms. Coleman (United States of America): I thank you, Sir, for convening today's very important meeting and I thank Senegal for its leadership in peacekeeping in general. I also thank today's briefers — Assistant Secretary-General Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Menkerios, High Representative Mr. Kaberuka and Ambassador Antônio.

Today marks a significant milestone after many months, in fact, many years, of discussions on ways the United Nations and the African Union (AU) could work together to build and even stronger partnership to address collective threats to peace and security. While the Charter of the United Nations has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the AU has been an indispensable partner in responding to crises on the African Continent, often deploying its troops and police in some of the most challenging and urgent threat environments.

We recall the early days of the conflict in Mali, in 2013, when African troops rapidly self-deployed overland as part of the African-led International Support Mission in Mali, in some cases with only the most basic equipment; or the Central African Republic in 2013, when despite lacking logistical support to deploy outside of the capital, the African-led operation

contained the spread violence. Let us recall Somalia, where brave AU-led forces have helped transform a country, once associated with State failure, into one where earnest State-building efforts are under way. Together the AU and the United Nations have partnered to try to address such crises, a reflection of shared responsibilities for restoring peace and security. But, in looking back on those past missions and, more broadly, on the United Nations-AU partnership, I think we can agree on two truths.

The first is that, unfortunately, such kinds of operations are unlikely to dissipate any time soon. To the contrary, more than a dozen sub-Saharan countries are now confronting threats from violent extremists, while civil war and unrest continue to threaten civilians in places like South Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The second truth, and what draft resolution contained in document S/2016/977 affirms today, internationals the need to strengthen the financial and operational underpinnings of the United Nations-AU partnership to better support African-led peace operations. Ad hoc arrangements, cobbled together whenever crises arise, are not a recipe for success or a good use of resources, which is why President Obama pledged during his July 2015 visit to AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, to help develop a new partnership that would transform how we work together to promote peace and security in Africa.

AU High Representative, Donald Kaberuka, has spearheaded that strategic effort by advancing plans to operationalize the AU peace fund and to fulfil the AU commitment to self-finance 25 per cent of the cost of AU-led peace operations by 2020. In July, at the AU Summit in Kigali, AU Heads of State took a historic decision, endorsing Mr. Kaberuka's plans. That significant commitment not only builds up African self-reliance in the AU's own words and ownership over African operations but is integral to a broader AU effort to ensure that the AU and its member States are in charge of their own destiny, including the use of its funds. The decision also sets an important cornerstone for advancing the AU-United Nations partnership by setting out operational, human rights and conduct frameworks to strengthen AU policies and procedures.

We recognize that United Nations peacekeepers are not always best positioned to respond to a crisis in Africa, especially when there is no peace to keep or armed groups threaten civilians, but we also recognize that the AU does not have sufficient capacity, in part because of insufficient and unreliable international support to respond effectively on its own. A stronger United Nations-AU partnership promises to leverage the comparative advantages of each for the benefit of all in the pursuit of peace and security across the continent. To realize the full potential of that partnership, more work needs to be done to build mutual trust, enhance complementarity and put in place new ways of working. I would like to focus on three factors that would be critical to get right for this partnership to reach its full potential.

The first factor is up-front mission planning, which my colleague from New Zealand has already highlighted. In cases where the Security Council is considering authorizing support for an AU-led operation under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations as the most effective way to respond to a crisis, the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council must work closely together from the outset. That requires consultations between the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council, the deployment of the joint United Nations-AU assessment team to evaluate the political, security, humanitarian and human rights situations on the ground and joint planning, including on the strategic concept, the concept of operations, forced generation and cost implications. Success will be enhanced by making sure that United Nations experts with critical experience and know-how, including financial and procurement expertise are fully integrated into those planning stages. That will ensure that both councils are working together to build the backbone of a mission that both institutions can support.

The second success factor is a fully implemented set of AU human rights and conduct and discipline compliance policies. That includes putting in place rigorous procedures for troop and police screening and selection, training, monitoring, reporting, independent investigations and holding perpetrators of violations and misconduct accountable. Such measures are critical for harmonizing AU policies and practices, with international legal obligations and standards, so that both the AU and the United Nations have clear systems in order to prevent abuses and misconduct and to promote accountability if and when allegations arise.

The third factor is ongoing mission evaluation and reporting. Meaningful mission evaluation requires joint evaluation and benchmarking exercises, throughout the duration of a mission. In that way, the AU Peace and

Security Council and the Security Council would be informed of the progress made towards achieving the mission mandate and able to make recommendations for adjusting the mandate as needed. It would also require regular reporting by the AU to the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council on its implementation of the Mission's mandate, in compliance with AU human rights and conduct and discipline policies. Such reporting would include allegations of human rights abuses, international humanitarian law transgressions and conduct and discipline issues and actions taken by the AU and troop- and police-contributing countries in response to allegations. That transparency would demonstrate the commitment of the AU in its troop- and police-contributing countries to upholding human rights and would serve as a critical step in achieving accountability for actions that undermine the legitimacy of peacekeeping and prey upon vulnerable populations.

Taken together, those three factors would form the foundation for a future partnership that we all have a strong, collective interest in seeing built. Such factors should be addressed in the AU and United Nations implementation details requested in the resolution to be adopted today, along with specific benchmarks and steps that would be taken to ensure that the AU Peace Fund is consistent with member State World Trade Organization obligations. Ultimately, to achieve those three elements, we will need to shake ourselves out of old biases and routines and work, hand in hand, to build that foundation together. Otherwise we risk needlessly losing more lives because the institutional status quo prevailed. The stakes for the AU's courageous peacekeepers and for the vulnerable civilians that they protect are simply too high.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Senegal for convening today's meeting and we welcome Foreign Minister Ndiaye as he presides over today's meeting. We listened very attentively to the statements by Assistant Secretary-General Wane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Menkerios, Ambassador António and Mr. Kaberuka.

The African Union (AU) is committed to African countries' strength in unity, cooperation, solidarity and to promoting the resolution of African issues in African ways and safeguarding peace and stability on the African continent. The international community universally commends its efforts.

In recent years, the United Nations and the AU have continued to advance cooperation in the area of peace and security, jointly work towards a political settlement of the questions of South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together deploy forces in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, engage in post-war reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone and play a positive role in safeguarding peace and stability on the African continent. China supports the strengthening of AU and United Nations cooperation in the area of peace and security and building partnerships of cooperation to safeguard regional peace and security. China would like to highlight the following points with regard to strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations and the AU in the area peace and security.

First, we should jointly uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The AU is an important platform for African countries to collectively respond to threats and challenges in the region. In accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the strengthening of cooperation between the AU and the United Nations is conducive to maintaining peace and stability in Africa. The United Nations should continue to support the African Union in its efforts to settle disputes through such peaceful means as dialogue, consultation, good offices and mediation, while respecting States' sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity.

Secondly, we should encourage shared notions in promoting collective security. The countries of the world are interdependent, with intertwined security. Parties should adhere to a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable concept of security and seek and promote security through cooperation. The cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union should be based on the concept of common security. They must strengthen strategic planning and engage in comprehensive cooperation in conflict prevention, resolving regional hotspot issues, safeguarding peace and peacebuilding so as to achieve win-win cooperation and common security.

Thirdly, we should coordinate and cooperate better, so as to promote the settlement of regional issues. The African Union has ample experience with good offices and mediation and advantages in geography, history and culture. Therefore, it has a unique role to play in

resolving contentious issues in Africa. China supports the United Nations in listening to the viewpoints of the AU and African countries so as to ensure that all parties, in the process of reaching political settlements on contentious African issues, can make full use of their respective advantages, complement each other, strengthen their coordination, take into account the root causes of regional hotspots, scale up the AU's input and thereby develop comprehensive and targeted solutions to issues.

Fourthly, we should support the AU in building the capacity of its collective security mechanism. Scaling up the AU's capacity-building in peace and security is conducive to better efforts in managing good offices and mediation and assuming more responsibilities in peacekeeping. It promotes the comprehensive settlement of regional issues. We hope that the United Nations will provide more support to buildingthe African Union's collective security mechanism in personnel training, setting up institutions, logistical support and funding, and that it will support building the African Standby Force and rapid response force in combating threats posed by terrorism and piracy in the region and effectively enhance the capacity of collective African security.

China attaches great importance and is strongly committed to promoting cooperation with the African Union in peace and security. So far, it has already participated in 16 United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, and there are 2,600 Chinese peacekeepers in missions such as in Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Darfur, and in the Sudan and Liberia.

At the summit commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that within the next five years China would provide $100 million to the African Union in military assistance grants to support building up the African Standby Force and the crisis rapid response force. Last year at the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, President Xi Jinping and the African leaders unanimously decided that the Chinese-African relationship would be upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership and highlighted that, in the coming three years, the emphasis would be placed on implementing cooperation plans in the following 10 areas: industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, financing, green development, trade, facilitating investment, improving people's livelihoods, and eradicating poverty, public health, people-to-people exchanges and peace and security. China will continue to participate in United Nations peacekeeping in Africa and will help African countries to strengthen their capacity-building in national defence, anti-terrorism, riot prevention, customs management and immigration control.

The coordinators' meeting of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was successfully concluded in July in Beijing, which further promoted practical cooperation between China and Africa in many areas. China is willing to work jointly with African countries and actively implement the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit and safeguard peace and stability on the African continent. We are committed to developing a new type of international relations with win-win cooperation at its core and building a community with a common, secure and bright future for us all.

Mrs. Gueguen Mohsen (France) *(spoke in French)*: I thank the four briefers for their introductory remarks, and the Senegalese presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate.

France fully endorses the statement to be made shortly by the Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union. I have four points to make.

First, the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on issues of peace and security is an indisputable and significant fact. African organizations, acting within the African Peace and Security Architecture, are increasingly assuming their responsibilities in crisis management on the African continent. At the same time, as a natural consequence, the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union becomes a necessity in the context of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. This development, which will only continue, will strongly mark the term of the incoming Secretary-General.

Secondly, France acknowledges, encourages and takes an active part in this development. On a bilateral basis, France is one of the primary partners in capacity-building for peace in Africa. Our partnerships foresee the training of 20,000 African soldiers by 2020. This is a major goal that we are committed to achieving.

France welcomes the role played by African Union and African regional organizations, both at the political level, such as the role that the Intergovernmental

Authority on Development plays in South Sudan and that of the Economic Community of Central African States in the Central African Republic, as well as at the military level, in the framework of complementarity with United Nations peacekeeping operations — for example, as illustrated in the transition from the African-led International Support Mission in Mali to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and in the transition from the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic — as well as, independently with the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram.

With regard to the Security Council, France believes that taking into account the views of regional organizations should become automatic and can lead the way to building consensus when there is a strong and consensus-based position of the African Union or a subregional organization.

Thirdly, this partnership should be strengthened in order to address at least four challenges, as called for in the recent report (S/2016/780) of the Secretary-General and in Mr. Kaberuka's report endorsed in July during the African Union Summit in Kigali.

The first challenge is that we need more collaboration and coordination. The United Nations and regional organizations act both simultaneously and consecutively with different modalities in response to the same crises. The regional dimension is unavoidable when the United Nations takes action after an African Union operation or in support of the implementation of a peace agreement negotiated in the region. All of those dimensions are tied together.

The second challenge is the need to identify which situations would benefit more from the added value of which organization. The United Nations does a great deal, but it cannot, and does not know how to, do everything. In certain situations, a regional organization is perhaps better equipped to respond to the specific circumstances on the ground. The African Union Mission in Somalia, for example, comes to mind, where the African Union brings genuine added value as compared with the capacities of the United Nations.

The third challenge is to ensure the necessary financial predictability and sustainability for African peace operations. That is the message of the Kaberuka report, presented to the Council in September by the African Union, which France welcomes. It includes proposals that should be seriously considered both by the African Union and its member States — which should finance 25 per cent of the cost of African operations — and by the United Nations — which should make a mandatory 75 per cent contribution to the cost of the operations.

The fourth challenge is to ensure that the funding structure is implemented within a robust, comprehensive partnership. Financing African peace operations through mandatory United Nations contributions must go hand in hand with the joint planning and monitoring capabilities of the Security Council and the African Union, which entails bolstering and even creating a mechanism that does not yet exist. We must also attach the greatest importance to respecting human rights, as operations mandated, supported and financed by the Security Council must respect the highest human rights standards and, more generally, must pay particular attention to the conduct of the operations. Finally, we must identify precisely what type of operations lend themselves to such a mechanism and what type of concrete support the United Nations could provide.

All of those challenges have been clearly identified in the three underlying reports for this debate, the Kaberuka report and the two Secretary-General reports from September. They are also taken up in the concept note (S/2016/966, annex) circulated by the delegation of Senegal for this meeting, as well as in the draft resolution contained in document S/2016/977, which will be put to the vote at the end of the debate. The draft resolution fully spells out the framework of the partnership and duly acknowledges the fact that, although the United Nations-African Union partnership on peace and security has a financial component, it is not entirely financial. Moreover, the draft text recognizes that there is much work yet to be done and calls on the Secretary-General and the African Union for their guidance in supplementary and complementary work. France fully supports that approach, and we thank Senegal and the United States for having proposed it.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain and the United Kingdom are participating jointly today under the so-called Toledo formula. As such, Spain aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the United Kingdom. We also align ourselves by the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union. We are grateful for the opportunity afforded to us by this debate, as well as

for the briefings on the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, a key alliance for peace and security on the African continent.

Although this decade has seen significant progress in that partnership, the rapid changes and growing complexity of global threats force us to adapt our responses and take full advantage of our respective competitive advantages. The advantage of the Security Council flows from the primacy conferred upon it by the Charter of the United Nations on peace and security issues, while the African Union's is rooted in due acknowledgement of the efforts of a dynamic and growing continent that is determined to forge its own future. The challenge today is to go from more or less improvised cooperation, depending upon the urgency of each emerging conflict, to a more institutionalized partnership that inspires confidence, is more effective and enhances synergies. That renewed partnership cannot be limited to deploying operations, but rather must encompass every phase of a conflict. I shall focus on prevention and mediation, and the representataive of the United Kingdom will cover peacekeeping aspects.

Prevention is key. The report (see S/2015/446) of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations report itself lays out the crucial primacy of politics. We know that the vast majority of conflicts in the African continent are politically based, and that they all require a political solution. It is worth noting that it is was trust and team work between the region and the United Nations that made it possible to settle crises in places such as Burkina Faso, and that it is a lack of understanding that hinders progress in other conflicts. There is a long path ahead of us, especially if we are to go from early warning signals to joint mobilization. Improving coordination, reducing response time and speaking in a unified voice continue to be significant challenges. The contribution of the United Nations Office to the African Union is undoubtedly essential in that regard. That is why welcome the ongoing review aimed at strengthening it.

Moreover, we should implement some of the proposals that several delegations made during the 24 May open debate (see S/PV.7694) on cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, to which the Ambassador of New Zealand referred in his statement. Those proposals include early, joint identification of potential crises, sharing information and increasing communication between the respective secretariats and Councils, holding informal brainstorming meetings and deploying joint missions on the ground. Cooperation on sanctions is another area to be looked into, as the effectiveness of sanctions largely depends upon regional implementation, and their legitimacy would be bolstered by the express political support of the region.

Finally, regarding mediation and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, a United Nations-African Union partnership would have obvious benefits. In that regard, we note and commend the initiative of the African Union to create a specialized registry of women mediators for the continent at the disposal of both the African Union and the United Nations. We also point to South Sudan as a future test case for the United Nations-African Union partnership, and to recall that it was the solidarity of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the Ssecurity Council in calling for an end to the clashes that made it possible to reach the August 2015 peace agreement. We believe it is time to once again raise our voice together.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom aligns itself fully with the statement just delivered by the representative of Spain. We are pleased to make two further points on the United Nations-African Union partnership — a partnership that will remain critical for peace and security on the African continent. I will focus my comments on the United Nations-African Union partnership in respect of United Nations peacekeeping and African Union (AU) peace support operations.

At the London 2016 defence ministerial meeting, the United Kingdom launched its focus on the "three Ps" of peacekeeping. That framework for improving peacekeeping is equally important in thinking about how we continue to approach the United Nations-AU partnership in terms of peace operations.

We need clear planning based on sharing of information and common threat assessments. We need consultative analysis and joint planning that reflects our respective roles and which extends throughout the life cycle of missions. In terms of pledges, AU member States are already significant troop contributors. The United Kingdom and Spain pay tribute to their service. AU member States bring unique and diverse capabilities, and we need to move to the next phase of better matching the experience of troops and police to the areas where they are deployed. In terms of performance, it is vital to have the right sort of

mission to face each challenge, which brings me to the very heart of the issue we discussed last week on how peacekeeping can evolve to work in high-threat environments (see S/PV.7802). In that debate, many of us commented on the unique comparative advantage of the AU in tackling such threats and taking on more direct peace-enforcement activity.

The AU and its member States are in many cases the ones that can respond to kinetic environments in a different way, as the African Union Mission in Somalia is designed to do in that country. For that very reason, we need the United Nations-AU partnership to continue to grow and be strengthened so that we are more than the sum of our parts.

That leads me to my second point. AU member States have made a welcome commitment to offering a significantly increased financial contribution to AU peace-support operations. That development has the potential to open up new opportunities for the partnership with the United Nations in the coming years. We need to have more detailed discussions on how we can collective enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for AU-led peace-support operations that are authorized by the Security Council. Mr. Kaberuka's work is an important contribution to this debate.

There will be a number of challenges for the United Nations and the AU to meet. At the top of that list are the strengthening of joint analysis and planning and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. We must also ensure accountability and oversight of missions' performance and financing. If we get this right, there are significant opportunities for the both the United Nations and the AU to improve oversight mechanisms and ensure high standards of performance and effective delivery of our mandates.

Put simply, we will be better placed to rise to the challenge of delivering peace and security on the African continent. The United Kingdom and Spain look forward to continuing this important discussion.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. Minister, for convening and presiding over today's important meeting. I also thank Mr. Wane, Mr. Menkerios, Mr. António and Mr. Kaberuka for their briefings.

Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) on peace and security has evolved markedly in recent years. Indeed, the international challenges we face today demand that our organizations develop an ever-closer strategic partnership.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the annual joint consultative meeting between the United Nations Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. Our dialogue and partnership will only continue to grow.

We are encouraged by AU commitments to make the AU more self-reliant, including via financial arrangements on peace-support operations through the African Peace Fund. Not only the United Nations Secretariat but also States Members of the United Nations themselves should respond to this progress by engaging in discussions on financial issues, as expressed in the draft resolution (S/2016/977) to be voted on later.

In discussing peacekeeping, we should recall that the true aim of the United Nations-AU partnership is sustaining peace. Strengthened peace operations are an important tool to that end, but not our final goal. I believe this is the essence of the AU aspiration to "silence the guns by 2020, through enhanced dialogue-centred conflict prevention and resolution". And as the Council recognized through its presidential statement S/PRST/2016/12, adopted under the Japanese presidency in July, we believe that peacebuilding is the key.

The AU has a comparative advantage in its contextual knowledge and mediation abilities in support of political solutions, including through the Panel of the Wise. Japan strongly believes in political solutions and has supported AU mediation efforts and good offices since 1996. Strengthened United Nations-AU partnerships in conflict management and peacebuilding will be key success factors in creating more effective peace operations and more sustainable peace in the long term.

Ultimately, it is Africa's socioeconomic development that will lead to sustainable peace and the AU's self-reliance. The AU Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development reminds us that security and development are closely linked.

As we consider how to strengthen United Nations-AU cooperation, we should focus on Agenda 2063's call for economic and human development, conflict prevention and institutions. The Tokyo International Conference

on African Development also complements United Nations-AU cooperation and is based on the principles of African ownership and international partnership.

More than anything, the United Nations-AU partnership is about empowering African States, societies and people to play an active role in creating a safer and more prosperous future. Japan looks forward to supporting continued collaboration that employs the comparative advantages of each organization in pursuit of our common goal.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are very happy to welcome you here once again, Mr. Minister, to preside over the Security Council. We took note of, and are grateful for, the briefings by the representatives of the United Nations and of the African Union (AU).

We are once again today discussing an important topic, namely, the partnership between the AU and the United Nations in ensuring peace and security. It is clear that there are ongoing serious threats and challenges in a number of African countries, including the marginalization of various groups and territories, the spread of terrorism, the activities of transnational organized-crime networks and piracy. There are ongoing conflicts as well as the destabilization of a number of countries and regions due, inter alia, to arbitrary interference from external forces. All of this leads to a hitherto unseen increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons. The international community should responde in a timely and effective manner to threats and challenges to security in Africa.

Obviously, we must prevent attempts to impose on Africans ready-made solutions without their clearly expressed consent. The experience of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and other countries demonstrates the harmful nature and ineffectiveness of such action.

We welcome efforts to find African-owned solutions. Africans know better than anyone else the situation and have situation-specific mechanisms at their disposal. We note progress in the creation of the African architecture for crisis response. We support the enhanced cooperation with the Africa Union so as to ensure peace and security on the continent.

Ignoring African views has adverse implications. It is enough to recall the result of disregard by external forces of the African Union initiative for political settlement in Libya in 2011.

Russia has consistently called for developing the partnership between the United Nations and African organizations, including between the United Nations Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The importance of such cooperation is affirmed in the conclusions and recommendations of last year's review of the United Nations peacekeeping architecture as well as the September reports of the Secretary-General.

We support further pooling of efforts between the United Nations and the African Union to stabilize the situations in Darfur, Somalia, Mali, the Sahel, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, as well as the conflict between the Sudan and South Sudan. We also would like to see closer cooperation on thematic issues, which would include combating international terrorism, transnational organized crime, piracy and illegal trafficking in weapons and narcotics.

We took note of the outcome of the United Nations-AU review on the matter of support to African peacekeeping operations entrusted with Security Council mandates. We stand ready for further constructive dialogue with our African partners. Of key importance, in our view, is increasing the predictability, reliability and flexibility of the financing of such operations. We agree on the importance of ensuring effective support to them from the United Nations and other international partners. Of equal importance is Africa's compliance with its own decisions and obligations. As far as we have gathered, it is expected that we will finish the development of a unified African approach at the AU Summit in January. We are all aware that there remains a divergence of views on this topic, even among African Security Council members.

For our part, we are of the view that the specific financial aspects of support to African peacekeeping operations through assessed contributions from United Nations States Members falls within the purview of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Encroachment by the Security Council into the Fifth Committee's prerogatives is counterproductive and undermines the long-standing division of the "division of labour" within the Organization. We share the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report

(S/2016/809) issued in September on the outcome of the joint AU-United Nations review, namely, that United Nations support to African peacekeeping should not add up solely to financial and other support. Partnership between the AU and the United Nations in support of peace and security also includes joint efforts in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding.

Russia is making a notable contribution to supporting peace and security on the African continent, which includes designing strategies to settle armed conflicts, as well defining mandates for the relevant peacekeeping operations of the United Nations in Africa. Russian troops and staff from the Ministry of the Interior participate in many such operations, and their activities are highly acclaimed by the Secretariat. My country pays particular attention to the training of police and military personnel from Africa. Specifically, in Russia there is yearly training of up to 80 peacekeepers. Staff from law enforcement agencies in Africa are given the possibility to participate in higher education programmes and internships at the short-term continuing education courses in Russia.

We are also making a significant contribution to eradicating the social and economic root causes of conflict in Africa. In particular, within the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, more than $20 billion have been written off of the bulk of African debt. The remaining debt has been rechannelled to assist Africans under the Debt for Development Programme. Furthermore, Russia is an active participant in providing across-the-board bilateral assistance to the continent in the framework of existing international mechanisms, including by making relevant contributions.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Senegalese delegation convening this morning's debate.

(*spoke in English*)

It is also my pleasure and honour to welcome today's briefers and thank them for their comprehensive presentations.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union.

Nowadays most of the United Nations peacekeeping operations are deployed on the African continent. Almost 50 per cent of the uniformed personnel in those missions are also provided by African States. That clearly demonstrates that United Nations peacekeeping efforts must closely cooperate with African States. At the same time, the United Nations is often slow in reacting to situations that can evolve into full-scale conflicts or situations where the civilian population is endangered and requires rapid protection action from the international community. In that regard, my delegation commends the African Union (AU) for having often acted as a first responder to crises even before the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers. Nevertheless, we have to admit that challenges remain and that more should be done to strengthen further the relationship between the United Nations and the AU to effectively address collective security concerns on the African continent.

In our view, financing is one of the priority areas in which further action could bring about tangible, positive results. The predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing for AU-led peace operations has been a long-standing issue. In that regard, the AU's decision to raise the continent's contribution to the costs of its peace-support operations to 25 per cent by 2020 is a highly commendable step. It will enhance African ownership and agenda-setting of peace initiatives of the African Union. In addition, I would like to flag other areas of particular importance.

First, it is imperative to eliminate a frequently occurring flaw in many AU peace-support operations, namely, a capability gap with regard to uniformed personnel. We believe that ensuring deployment readiness and improved performance require collective and coordinated actions by the United Nations and the AU. As one of the leading European troop- and police- contributing countries to the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, Ukraine knows at first-hand how difficult and unpredictable situations in the areas of missions' responsibility can sometimes be due to the existing climate or security conditions. Cooperation on strengthening the capabilities of African Union units prior to their deployment therefore could include, but not be limited to, sharing of best practices and providing special training. For instance, the United Nations has already introduced the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System, which has proved to be a useful tool for United Nations peacekeeping operations. In our view, it could be emulated by the African Union.

Secondly, recently the Security Council, along with other United Nations States Members, discussed the issue of asymmetrical threats that United Nations operations face nowadays (see S/PV.7802). It was clear

from those deliberations, as well as from the relevant reports on peacekeeping operations, that United Nations peacekeeping missions are not a proper tool to combat terrorism. Many hold a view that military measures to counter terrorism and violent extremism are the responsibility of national Governments and the relevant regional organizations. Therefore, we see a great merit in the United Nations providing advice and expertise in support of respective African Union endeavours.

Thirdly, after recent peacekeeping and peacebuilding reviews at the United Nations, we consider a people-centred approach to such activities of the Organization to be axiomatic. In that respect, we believe that the protection of civilians is a decisive factor not only for the success of United Nations operations, but also those of the AU endorsed by the Security Council. It is therefore worth considering establishing an effective framework for the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy in African Union peace operations. From the peacekeeping experience of the United Nations, it is clear that there is no peace without human rights.

Last but not least, in the light of the recent resolutions of the Council and General Assembly on peacebuilding architecture, it is important to look back at the 2015 joint communiqué between the African Union and the Security Council, which envisaged a conduct of joint United Nations-AU field missions to areas of conflict in Africa. We should consider implementing that commitment while organizing field missions of the Security Council, which we see as an important conflict-prevention tool. Inviting representatives of Peacebuilding Commision country-specific configurations to such missions could also improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's visits.

In conclusion, Ukraine would like to reiterate its position that, as an elected member of the Council and an observer State to the AU, we stand ready to engage constructively on each and every initiative aimed at enhancing United Nations-AU cooperation on issues related to peacekeeping, peace support and peacebuilding on the African continent. People have suffered for too long in many parts of that great continent, and the international community has a moral responsibility to make every effort to achieve lasting peace and stability wherever that might be needed.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Senegalese presidency for having chosen the topic of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union for the November programme of work, owing to the importance of the issue in implementing in practice Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. This is one of the most important partnerships between the United Nations and international organizations. I also thank all of the briefers, in particular Mr. Kaberuka, whose mandate we support.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations has recently increased in importance as there is a growing awareness that no party can single-handedly confront the emerging patterns of transboundary threats to international peace and security — chief among them are terrorism and organized crime. That has helped foster new approaches towards forging partnerships at the regional, continental and international levels aimed at confronting such challenges. It has led to the conviction that cooperation, coordination and joint work are an indispensable option, facilitated through the division of labour among the relevant parties and building on their comparative advantages, towards achieving the desired goals and outcomes.

In cooperation with regional economic communities and with the support of its partners, in particular the United Nations, over the years the African Union has undertaken an active role in providing security and stability in Africa. That was made possible by putting in place and operationalizing its Peace and Security Architecture and taking early initiatives to intervene in a timely manner in crises in various areas of the continent through missions that enjoy flexible, enhanced and developed mandates tailored to dealing with the reality on the ground. It also includes adopting new concepts that go beyond the role of conventional peacekeeping, combating terrorism, supporting the establishment of State institutions and confronting other unconventional challenges.

In that regard, I commend the sacrifices made by the African Union missions in Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic, among other countries, and pay tribute to their effective contributions to confronting the peace and security challenges in Africa and throughout the world. The establishment of the Peace and Security Architecture in Africa was linked to an increased awareness of the importance of African ownership. African Union Summits have adopted decisions on enhancing phased self-reliance

in the funding of those activities as well as the operationalization of the Peace Fund as a main pillar of the Architecture. Ongoing discussions continue within the relevant bodies of the African Union to develop practical and effective mechanisms to implement those decisions so as to achieve the desired goals.

The significant developments within Africa and the United Nations have coincided with the report (see S/2008/813) of the high-level panel chaired by former Prime Minister Prodi and the report (see S/2015/446) of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, thereby encompassing developments in conflicts and international crises. It is a matter of providing an opportunity for an integrated vision in supporting peace and security as well as launching new partnerships aimed at finding innovative solutions to crises and conflicts. The partnership between the United Nations and the African Union is therefore of particular importance. It enables the United Nations to actively respond peace and security challenges on the continent. Items pertaining to Africa account for 70 per cent of the agenda of Security Council, and, in that regard, I stress the importance of implementing the recommendations of the relevant reviews and reports.

It is also important to build upon the continuing efforts to develop the African Peace and Security Architecture so as to give impetus to and enhance the institutional partnership between the United Nations and African Union, thereby creating a strategic partnership based on shared and jointly shouldered responsibilities, including adopting workplans to ensure regular funding of African Union peace operations. That would allow for the development of African capacity in the area of preventive diplomacy and mediation, as well as peacebuilding and reconstruction in post-conflict situations. It is also crucial to enhance the institutional cooperation between the Secretariat of the United Nations and the African Union Commission in order to enhance the implementation of agreed programmes and projects within the operations framework agreed by the two organizations, as well as to support the United Nations Office to the African Union. That would allow the Office to carry out its functions as a focal point between the two organizations.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that, as a member of both the United Nations and of the African Union, Egypt is determined to actively participate in enhancing the partnership between the two organizations. It is our conviction that that is the ideal path towards countering today's problems facing Africa, and the world in general. They are complex and multifaceted challenges. Once again, I reiterate that Egypt will exert every effort to support the work of Mr. Kaberuka.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay): We appreciate your presence at this open debate, Sir, and congratulate the presidency of Senegal for having organized it. We thank Mr. Wane, Mr. António, Mr. Menkerios and Mr. Kaberuka for their respective briefings.

Uruguay believes that cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations is an invaluable tool to improve collective security in a world that is increasingly in turmoil and faces complex and multidimensional threats. Cooperation among States is fundamental to the prevention and peaceful settlement of conflicts. Regional organizations are playing an increasingly important role in international peacebuilding and security, insomuch as they contribute to a deepened understanding of their respective regions and wield a greater sensitivity and comprehension of realities on the ground, thereby paving the way to effectively confront the problems and conflicts that affect their respectivepositions on the map.

In the case of Africa, cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union is crucial and imperative given the existence of conflict situations in complex settings, in the context of which we face asymmetrical threats and the spread of violent extremism and terrorism, and where in many cases we also must tackle humanitarian crises and mass violations of human rights.

Against this backdrop, we very much welcome the work carried out with determination and energy by the African Union to achieve peace and development in Africa. We also welcome the progress made in terms of cooperation between that organization and the United Nations, but we believe that this partnership should be further strengthened through more frequent interaction and consultations, paving the way for a common understanding of conflicts and the elaboration of common strategies. In that respect, we trust that the draft resolution (S/2016/977) to be adopted today will contribute to that process.

One of the major shortcomings of the system, according to the Ramos-Horta report (see S/2015/446), pertains to the financing of this strategic partnership. It is for that reason that we deem it desirable that

the United Nations and the African Union pool their efforts aimed at establishing predictable, flexible and sustainable mechanisms aimed at bolstering peace-support operations in the African region.

Furthermore, given that conflict prevention is a major priority, I should like to stress also that the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture (see S/2015/490) notes that peacebuilding efforts must be backed by a predictable and sustainable allocation of resources.

While acknowledging the leading role played by the Security Council in matters relating to international peace and security, we must nonetheless identify the complementary functions that both organizations could carry out, harnessing their capacities, influence and experience to ensure a consistent, coherent response in various contexts. For example, the efforts in the areas of mediation, facilitation and good offices carried out by the African Union in various countries, including the Sudan, South Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must be harmonized with, and complementary to, the efforts and actions undertaken by the Security Council.

One area in which we believe the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union must continue to progress is that of human rights and humanitarian law. In that respect, we express our support for the United Nations Office to the African Union and for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with respect to their assistance in strengthening the operational capacity of military, police and civilian peacekeeping staff, with an emphasis on the central importance of human rights in peacekeeping operations.

Our country attaches a great deal of importance to the role played by peacekeeping operations, which we believe are of particular importance in Africa, where more than 60 per cent of peacekeeping operations and more than 80 per cent of all United Nations uniformed peacekeeping personnel are located, and given that more than 80 per cent of the annual peacekeeping budget is earmarked for missions in Africa.

I think it worth highlighting that over the past decade, the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union has achieved a great deal of progress, having established various forms of cooperation, including in the missions in Mali, the Central African Republic, Somalia and the Sudan. The success of peacekeeping operations requires ever more robust cooperation between both organizations; for example, in the process of drafting mandates, it is essential that both organizations pull clearly in the same direction.

To conclude, we acknowledge that the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the African Union has made further headway in the development of cooperation mechanisms, including, inter alia, mechanisms for consultative decision-making, joint analysis, planning and assessment; an integrated response to the conflict cycle; and joint efforts to prevent conflict and promote accountability and transparency. Such advances, which must continue to be fine-tuned and adapted to new realities, could serve as a model and a reference for the establishment and strengthening of partnerships between the United Nations and other regional organizations, thus bolstering synergies and promoting complementarity, taking into account at all times the unique features of each and respecting the mandates of each organization.

This would allow us to benefit from and develop the potential of regional organizations, which, in keeping with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, represent vital pillars of United Nations actions aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation joins other Council members in thanking Senegal for having convened today's debate, and we thank you, Mr. Minister, for presiding over it. We wish also to express our appreciation to all the briefers for their respective briefings. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/780), which provides further context for the subject at hand.

Malaysia remains committed to further strengthening and consolidating the comprehensive partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, particularly on issues of peace and security in Africa. Such comprehensive partnership would go a long way towards further strengthening our collective and ongoing efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this context, my delegation pays tribute to the work of the United Nations Office to the African Union, which has been instrumental in strengthening the partnership within the two organizations.

Nonetheless, although significant progress has been made to improve cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in recent years, more

could be achieved to make the partnership more meaningful, efficient and effective. It is therefore imperative that such cooperation continue to be underpinned by, inter alia, a common strategic objective and a clear division of responsibilities, and premised on shared assessments, with a view to mutually reinforcing and complementing the decisions of both the United Nations and the African Union.

It is patently clear that the lessons learned and best practices on the cooperation between the two organizations should be shared on a regular basis through a structured mechanism with a view to producing tangible, results-oriented operational benefits on the ground and avoid task redundancies and duplication, including through more frequent secretariat-to-secretariat exchanges.

The opportunity afforded by the three comprehensive reviews on the United Nations peacebuilding architectures, United Nations peace operations and resolution 1325 (2000), concluded last year, provided a timely opportunity to reflect on ways and means of reinforcing cooperation in areas of common interest to the United Nations and the African Union on promoting and sustaining peace. We remain committed to the follow-up and implementation phases of the review, in coordination and cooperation with all partners and stakeholders.

While conflict management remains a core function of the United Nations and regional organizations, there has been a renewed push, of which my delegation is fully supportive, towards the strengthening of collective efforts to prevent conflict from escalating into full-blown threats to international peace and security.

In this regard, Malaysia remains convinced that conflict prevention must continue to be prioritized in the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. We should continue to improve the efficiency of the United Nations-African Union preventive diplomacy, which should be geared towards more coordinated actions, including by enabling early detection and actions to defuse potential crisis situations.

We share the view that regional actors, which assume greater ownership of development in their respective regions, have the potential to contribute immensely to shaping positive outcomes for peace, security and development. The United Nations should be encouraged to leverage the comparative advantages of regional organizations, which possess a better understanding of the dynamics and root causes of conflicts in their respective regions. Be that as it may, it is important to bear in mind recent experiences in the Central African Republic, Mali and Somalia, among other places, which have revealed some key areas and stresses that stretch the limits and capacity of regional organizations in dealing with such challenging situations. Without sufficient financial and capacity-building support, the ability to deliver will not match the aspirations and determinations of regional organizations, particularly in harsh and challenging situations. It is also equally important to guard against burden-sharing becoming burden-shifting, as unrealistic expectations are placed on regional organizations that have yet to build full capacity.

In that context, Malaysia appreciates and commends the African Union for its leadership in taking ownership of the region's peace and security agenda. We note, however, that its ambition is severely constrained by the lack of necessary resources, particularly in terms of flexible, sustainable and predictable funding. We commend and fully support the ongoing efforts and commitments of the AU to enhance self-reliance in that regard. It is for those reasons that we welcome the bold and forward-looking positions adopted by the AU leaders during the twenty-seventh African Union Summit, held in Kigali in July, to establish and operationalize the African Union Peace Fund. As such, we are pleased to support the draft resolution (S/2016/977), jointly initiated by Senegal and the United States, scheduled to be adopted today. We believe that unanimous adoption of the draft resolution will send a strong message of support from the Council to the African Union's member States. We are convinced that the draft resolution is a necessary step towards further cementing the close coordination and cooperation between the two organizations.

In conclusion, we hope that discussions today generate more ideas and strategies in order to deepen and strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union with a view to enhancing the capacity of the international community and regional organizations to respond effectively to emerging threats in the African region and beyond.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. João Pedro Vale de Almeida, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vale de Almeida (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its 28 member States. The candidate countries of Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; countries; Bosnia and Herzegovina, country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me first thank you, Mr. President, for having taken the initiative to organize this debate on such an important topic and for the very good concept note (S/2016/966, annex). I would also like to thank the representatives of the United Nations and of the African Union (AU) who are present and who have provided very helpful briefings.

The European Union encourages and supports intensified cooperation in the area of security and peacekeeping between the United Nations and the African Union, as it has developed over the course of the past 10 years, since the launch in 2006 of the United Nations 10-year capacity-building programme for the African Union. For its part, the European Union has always defended effective multilateralism and has focused on strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations and regional organizations, in particular the African Union. We have also invested in strong triangular cooperation in order to meet the immediate challenges as well as to develop capacities in a global and long-term perspective. The added value of that cooperation is clearly illustrated by the results of our joint efforts in Somalia, Mali and the Central African Republic, as in other parts of Africa.

Secondly, we would like to express our deep gratitude for Africa's contribution to the difficult task of maintaining peace, whether under Blue Helmets or as part of a regional force. As all troop-contributing countries know, this contribution sometimes goes hand in hand with a tragic human cost.

We welcome the reviews conducted in 2015 on peacekeeping operations, the peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). We hope that the follow-up work will include concrete measures to improve the global security architecture, with full respect for the role of regional organizations and the United Nations partnership with the African Union. The European Union also promotes the engagement of the United Nations and regional organizations with civil society in peacebuilding, conflict prevention and mediation.

The European Union and the African Union have a long-standing and solid partnership in the area of peace and security. Among the five priorities identified at the fourth European Union-Africa Summit, held in 2014, cooperation on matters of peace and security is by far the most important of the five identified, notably from a financial point of view. Our ongoing political and financial commitment to support African-led peace operations on the continent will be reaffirmed at the highest level at the upcoming fifth European Union-Africa Summit, to be held in Côte d'Ivoire in November 2017. Our continuing financial commitment was recently illustrated by the release in August of €50 million for the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram, and in the €178 million for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Consultations are under way in Brussels on the next — the sixteenth — package for AMISOM, which will be used to finance its troops' salaries through March 2017.

The European Union has contributed more than €2 billion to the African Union through the the African Peace Facility (APF) since it was established, in 2004. Most of those resources support African peace operations, which have played a fundamental role in maintaining peace and stability in the continent. The European Union's broad, sustainable financial support for peace and security in Africa goes far beyond that instrument, to include national and regional cooperation by our member States. However, financial resources for the APF are strongly solicited. For the African Union Mission in Somalia alone, by the end of 2015 the European Union had contributed more than €1 billion. At this rate, the APF will soon be unable to continue to support AMISOM and to respond to any emerging priorities.

(*spoke in English*)

Increasingly, there is widespread recognition that Africa and the European Union need to work together against the menace of terrorism, which is not constrained by borders. Terrorism is an existential threat for several African countries, and it needs to be opposed through increased international cooperation. This asymmetrical danger requires improved approaches, necessitating a long-term security response and long-term troop deployments, which increasingly need sustainable

financing — something that is difficult to achieve solely through the African Peace Facility.

The European Union welcomed the important decision taken by the African Union Summit in Kigali, held in July, to finance the African Union Peace Fund by introducing a levy of 0.2 per cent on eligible imports that would automatically flow to the African Union. The mobilization of additional African resources is a sign of strong ambition and ownership by the continent. The African Union Finance Ministers meeting in Addis Ababa in September took some important steps towards the implementation of the groundbreaking decision at the AU Summit in Kigali. We look forward to the official launch of the fund, expected during the forthcoming AU Summit in January 2017. In that context, I would like to salute Mr. Kaberuka's chairmanship and the good work we are developing with him.

The EU is also following with interest the outcome of the the African Union Political and Security Committee retreat held in Lusaka from 7 to 10 November, which was presented with an ambitious yet practicable master road map as a milestone towards achieving the aspirations of Africans for the continent they want, as elaborated in Agenda 2063, in particular aspiration 4, for a peaceful and secure Africa.

There is recognition within the European Union of the need to reorient our financial support towards more practical, physical capacities such as logistics and deployment. The bulk of APF funding to date has gone to stipends for African troops serving in peace support operations, paid to their Governments via the African Union. While that funding remains necessary, and important in some cases, better complementarity and synergy between APF support and African Peace and Security Architecture is needed. For that reason, future APF support will be geared more towards prevention and mediation, and its support to peace operations will move partially away from stipend-oriented funding — in favour of the strengthening of operational capacities such as logistics, medical support, strategic lift and communication and information systems — with the objective of creating sustainable African capabilities to address present and future peace challenges.

Following a request from the African Union, we have agreed to mobilize funding for the third phase of the African Peace and Security Architecture support programme for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2018, in an amount of nearly €30 million. The third phase of the support programme will follow the road map structure of the Peace and Security Architecture, while building on the support provided since 2011, and will contribute to further strengthening the capacities of the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities — the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Ceatral African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Southern African Development Community — and two regional mechanisms — the North African Regional Capacity and the Eastern Africa Standby Force — to fulfil their respective mandates under the African Peace and Security Architecture.

The road map also maps out a shared way forward on the results to be achieved by all stakeholders under the African Peace and Security Architecture to reduce existing capacity gaps in the operationalization of the Architecture. It clearly identifies measurable, specific objectives and outputs to be achieved to that end in each of its priority areas. In the same vein, the strategic headquarters in Addis Ababa need to be fully operationalized, which is one of the goals of the current support programme for the African Peace and Security Architecture. The EU stands ready to provide technical expertise, technologies and training to achieve that very important goal.

In conclusion, we remain strongly committed to an ever-stronger partnership with the AU, as well as increased triangular EU-United Nations-AU cooperation, in order to fully achieve the establishment of lasting African peace and security capacities, in full respect of African ownership.

The President (*spoke in French*): Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/977, which the text of a draft resolution submitted by Senegal and the United States of America.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by a show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and

Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2320 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation supported and voted in favour of resolution 2320 (2016), for we are aware of how important it is to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU). Such cooperation is one of the cornerstones of the maintenance of international peace and security, which is further based on the pre-eminent role of the African Union to sow the seeds for peace and security in Africa through the peaceful settlement of conflicts, as well as by providing financing for peace and security. My country, which is very proud to be a founding member of the African Union, fully subscribes to the need to strengthen cooperation between our two organizations — the United Nations and the AU — in all areas and aspects, particularly in international peace and security. Such a partnership is necessary if we are to achieve our commonly set goals in this area, commensurate with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Resolution 2320 (2016) addresses issues pertaining to United Nations financing of African Union peace support operations, particularly the Peace Fund. Resolution 2320 (2016) also refers to the AU resolution to take responsibility for its share of the financing of peace support operations, part of the concept of African ownership of these peace operations, which we support and would like to underscore the importance of. Discussions between member States of the African Union are ongoing in the framework of the relevant AU mechanisms in order to further expand upon how we will define the means to ensure the shared financing decided upon by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

Along the same lines, we shall take actions that are tangible and can be properly implemented to open the door to such financing. On this particular point, my delegation calls for a swift conclusion of AU discussions so that we are in a position to define and establish the measures that need to be adopted by the United Nations in response, so that support that can be given to peacekeeping and peace support operations. We hope that this will lead to predictable, flexible and sustainable financing and support AU peace operations.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are convinced of the importance of strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and African regional and subregional organizations to ensure peace and security on the continent. The Russian delegation therefore voted in favour of resolution 2320 (2016). However, we are forced to note that, during work on the resolution, the co-sponsors did not take on board a number of important amendments from some delegations, ours included.

We are puzzled by the refusal to include in the resolution references to the basic principles of peacekeeping, which have been approved by Member States many times. We cannot shake the impression that this is a cover-up for the intention to deploy African peacekeeping operations against the will of host parties and in violation of the principle of impartiality. The universal basic principles of peacekeeping are obligatory for any operation, especially those approved by the Security Council. A paradox arises in that regard when United Nations support is requested, but United-Nations-approved principles are ignored. The resolution is also replete with specific language likely more characteristic of the General Assembly and its Fifth Committee than of the Security Council.

We call attention to the fact that there was a lack of unity among African delegations on the Security Council in agreeing on the resolution. The 29 September communique of the African Union Peace and Security Council calls for such unity. As we understand it, the African Union itself has not yet settled on a final position on the modalities for funding its own peace operations, and it intends to draft such during the Summit to be held in Addis Ababa in January.

We are also unhappy with the working methods of the co-sponsors, who did not fully take into account the legitimate concerns of several delegations and stubbornly stuck to their language, which made it more difficult to achieve consensus on this very important resolution.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7817

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7817th meeting
Monday, 21 November 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Seck	(Senegal)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/962)

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16-39409 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/962)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Ms. Elizabeth Hoff, World Health Organization representative in Syria.

Ms. Hoff is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Damascus.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/962, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: As we meet again this month, the suffering of civilians in Aleppo and across Syria rages on unabated. Horror is now usual; it is a level of violence and destruction that the world appears to consider normal for Syria and for the Syrian people. Month after month, I have reported to the Council that the level of depravity inflicted upon the Syrian people cannot sink lower, only to return the following month, in shocked disbelief, with hideous new reports of ever-worsening human suffering.

I am more or less at my wits' end as a human being, but I am here, like my colleagues, to be professional and objective. I had hoped to say today that last month I put it all on the table, and, frankly, it is still just as terrible. Let us leave it at that. Shame on us all for not acting to stop the annihilation of eastern Aleppo and its people and much of the rest of Syria, as well. Of all the facts and reports that I gave last month (see S/PV.7795), not one of them has been changed, qualified, denied or proven wrong by anyone in or outside of this Chamber. My statement then detailed the objective reality of what was taking place in Aleppo. It was hoped that the advocacy undertaken by me and others demand that sanity and humanity prevail and reporting based on clear and undisputable facts — although it is sometimes unpleasant to hear and even an inconvenient truth — might have an impact. There was a glimmer of hope. A unilateral Russian and Syrian pause on aerial bombardment over eastern Aleppo instituted on 18 October for an initial 72 hours was maintained beyond the stated end. We last met on 26 October (see S/PV.7795), when I welcomed the then ongoing pause in air strikes from the Russian Federation and the Government of Syria, although members will recall that my welcome was not heard that day in all quarters of the Council.

Daily and even weekly, the pause held over eastern Aleppo. The same was not the case for western Aleppo, as non-State armed groups launched hundreds of mortars into civilian areas in the western part of the city. Had all parties had the fortitude to cease all attacks over Aleppo, today's might have been a different briefing. But I cannot leave it at that because — one can hardly believe it — it is even worse now. Regrettably, over the past week we have seen an intense unleashing of military aggression in Aleppo and the surrounding rural area with truly devastating consequences for civilians. The pause over eastern Aleppo was shattered, thereby returning the city and its inhabitants to death and destruction once again. Reports of a high tempo of air strikes and shelling across areas of Aleppo city, held by non-State armed groups, reportedly by Syrian Government forces began again on 15 November. For the sake of accuracy and completeness, let me report here that the Russian Federation has repeatedly asserted that its air force and air strikes have resumed only in Idlib and Homs and not over eastern Aleppo.

Since last Tuesday, the bombing of eastern Aleppo has not stopped. Over the past days, reports have indicate that hundreds of civilians have been killed, injured or otherwise affected by the relentless attacks on eastern Aleppo. Entire families were reported to have been buried under rubble in the Al-Sukkari

district as first responders searched for survivors. Fires raged from incendiaries and household gas breaches in residential buildings following the attacks that stretched throughout eastern Aleppo. Deaths were reported in at least 10 neighbourhoods. As of yesterday, there are barely any functional hospitals left in eastern Aleppo able to treat those who have escaped death, as all the hospitals are being bombed into oblivion.

In parallel, more than 350 mortars and rockets have been reportedly launched by non-State armed groups indiscriminately into western Aleppo since 1 November, killing over 60 people, including women and children, and injuring more than 350 others. Over the weekend, an attack on a school in the Al-Furqan district in western Aleppo with mortar shells and rocket projectiles by non-State armed groups reportedly killed eight children and injured several others, while the local university was also hit. Overall, some 25,000 people have been displaced in western Aleppo in the last few weeks as a result of shelling by non-State armed groups. Let me be clear. We are not just seeing a resumption of violence in Aleppo. It is not business as usual. What has been unleashed on civilians this past week is yet another low in an unrelenting inhuman onslaught, and it is as heart-breaking as it is not inevitable. The parties to the conflict are — all of them — choosing to do this. It is civilians who pay the price.

Since July, 275,000 civilians have been trapped in eastern Aleppo owing to the siege tactics placed on them by the Syrian Government and its allies. Russia and Syria have opened corridors for civilians to leave, but they are reportedly unsafe or perceived as unsafe to traverse. There have also been reports that non-State armed groups inside eastern Aleppo prevented those wishing to leave the city from doing so. Humanitarian conditions in eastern Aleppo have gone from terrible to terrifying and now barely survivable by human beings. On 13 November, the last of the available food rations from the World Food Programme were distributed. Pre-positioned before United Nations access was cut off in July, rations were drawn out as long as possible, but now they are gone. Only a handful of rations from local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) remain, food in markets is scarce and prices have skyrocketed. Fuel and gas to cook food are reportedly unavailable in most neighbourhoods. That is resulting in negative coping strategies, reducing meals and restricting diets to feed children.

And along with limited food and medicine, there has been growing discontent with protests against corruption and a monopoly on goods reported last week, some of which turned violent, indicating the extreme desperation of the trapped citizens. And to add to the humanitarian crisis, they will shortly face a harsh winter without heating or the bare essentials for life. The United Nations has employed significant and tireless efforts to deliver life-saving aid. I yield to no one in saluting the undiluted, selfless bravery of all humanitarian aid workers across the United Nations, including the international NGOs, the local NGOs, first responders and people in their communities and families. They do that time and again, if they do not fall victim themselves at the time that they venture out, even risking a cynical second follow-on air strike, shell or sniper's bullet deliberately aimed at them, searching for life and saving lives. Let us repeat — they are not a target. And I urge the Government of Syria to give the Secretary General's internal board of inquiry into the attack on the humanitarian convoy, which resulted in the death of aid workers on 19 September at Oram Al-Kubra, full access in Syria to conduct its investigations.

Our teams in Damascus and Gaziantep have presented successive plans to all sides, working to ensure delivery of medical supplies and evacuation of the most urgent medical cases. We stand ready to move the moment that security guarantees by all parties are granted. The United Nations four-point plan presented last week to all parties includes critical medical evacuations and delivery of medical supplies. It includes the provision of food and other essential relief items. Finally, it includes the rotation of doctors to provide assistance to those in need. The 30 medical doctors left in eastern Aleppo city, exhausted from their heroic efforts and non-stop work from July continue to serve in unrelentingly traumatic circumstances.

All parties have the plan, and we have been engaging in unremitting discussions to obtain their agreement to proceed. But the restart of intense fighting is a clear setback to our goal of reaching agreement and delivering to those in need. Yet we are not deterred. Despite the bombing and whatever the difficulty, we are determined to follow through. The United Nations humanitarians and our partners will not give up on the people of Aleppo. We will continue to insist on the parties' obligations to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law and see to

sustained humanitarian assistance delivered to those in eastern Aleppo and all who are in need throughout Syria. I call on all with influence — that is the phrase I am diplomatically required to use, but those around this table and beyond knows who they are — to do their part to end the senseless cycles of violence once and for all and put an end to the slaughterhouse that is Aleppo. All sides, and those with influence over them, must immediately provide the necessary guarantees for the humanitarian four-point plan to move ahead.

While it defies comprehension, the citizens of eastern Aleppo are not alone in the depths of horrors being faced by civilians in Syria today. I remain seriously concerned about the fate of all those living in besieged locations. Aid deliveries and medical evacuations to the towns under the Four Towns ceasefire agreement covering Zabadani, Madaya, Fu'ah and Kafraya and surrounding areas, known as the Four Towns Agreement, have been unable to deploy owing to the tit-for-tat nature of the agreement.

The gruesome deaths by starvation in Madaya shocked the world in January and dragged the parties to the conflict to allow the delivery of aid. February, March and April this year all saw aid deliveries to the four towns. However, since then, the situation has deteriorated. Only one convoy has reached the four towns in over six months and that was on 25 September. In addition to no supplies getting in, those in need of medical attention are dying because they are not being allowed to leave. Since I last reported to the Council (see S/PV.7795), at least three people have died due to the denial by parties to the Four Towns Agreement to enable the evacuation of people who could have been saved but for that punitive application of the tit-for-tat approach. More will die soon in each of the four towns if that travesty is not resolved. I urge those with influence over the parties to the Agreement, notably Jaish Al-Fatah and Iran, must do all they can to see that aid is delivered immediately and that those requiring medical care are able to evacuate.

I have long called for the lifting of all sieges, which have become one of the most prevalent and insidious aspects of this merciless conflict. Yet, this past year, we have seen the opposite — a massive increase in the use of besiegement and of the overwhelming numbers of people, particularly by the Government of Syria. This time last year, the number of besieged people stood at 393,700. Six months ago, it stood at 486,700. Today, I have to report to the Council that, following a comprehensive review, we estimate that tonight a total of 974,080 people — nearly 1 million Syrians — are living under siege. New locations include Jubar in Damascus and Hajjar Al-Aswad, Khan Al-Shih and multiple areas in the enclave of eastern Ghouta in rural Damascus.

There is nothing subtle or complicated about the practice of besiegement. Civilians are being isolated, starved, bombed and denied medical attention and humanitarian assistance in order to force them to submit or flee. It is a deliberate tactic of cruelty to compound the people's suffering for political, military and, in some cases, economic gain to destroy and defeat a civilian population, who cannot fight back, and perpetrated monstrously by the one party, above all, who should be defending and protecting its own citizens — all of them, even those who do not like and disagree with the State and its leader and his Government. Those maintaining the sieges know by now that the Council is apparently unable or unwilling to enforce its will or agree now on steps to stop them. The procedures give us crumbs: an occasional convoy here and there around the time of Council briefings, to tick the box that we are all trying our best. But the near 1 million Syrians trapped in besieged locations cannot live on crumbs. The real question is — how can we prevent now nearly 1 million people from being subject to a cruel form of collective punishment that gets more severe and intense, month after month, across the country? If the Council cannot come together to bring an end to sieges, then it and we must all ask ourselves why we are having this meeting here this morning.

Attacks on civilian infrastructure, most notably hospitals and schools, have become so commonplace, it takes one's breath away. Such attacks are violations of international humanitarian law. Some have been called out as war crimes by the Secretary-General, including again yesterday and the High Commissioner for Human Rights has indicated that some may even amount to crimes against humanity. They are senseless, unconscionable acts with no purpose other than to punish civilians, including women, children and the infirm, and deny those left behind the means to survive or rebuild. Millions of Syrian children have had their childhoods ripped away by calculated and reckless attacks on schools. In the last two weeks of October alone, the lives and dreams of 30 children were stolen during attacks on five schools. On 26 October, the very day of my most recent briefing when denials were

screeching through the air, 22 children and six of their teachers were killed, when their school compound was repeatedly attacked in Hass, Idlib governorate. But the facts are that the children and their teachers are dead. Death, a dead body, warm to cold blood — however hard anyone may try, death is an undeniable fact and there is always a cause of death.

Let us imagine the terror of those children; imagine those who may have survived the first strike, some hysterical, some frozen in fear, only to see another round coming in. This year, UNICEF has documented 84 attacks on schools, killing at least 69 children and injuring many more. And what of those who survived such attacks — those children who dream of becoming doctors? To become a health-care worker in Syria is to take on a dangerous profession and to even go to a medical facility is to risk one's life. The Council adopted resolution 2286 (2016), protecting health-care professionals and facilities, but that has resulted in scant protection to those in Syria.

From 1 November to 18 November, 13 attacks were verified, and there are reports of many more attacks. Hospitals, health centres, blood banks and ambulances have all been hit. The fact is, since resolution 2286 (2016) was adopted on 3 May, over 130 attacks on medical facilities have been documented. The Syrian war has already killed more than 750 medical personnel. It is a disgusting and blatant disregard for the special protected status of health-care facilities under international humanitarian law and a clear spit in the face of the Council's resolution, as my World Health Organization colleague will expand on after my briefing. Despite the challenges and hardships, the United Nations and our partners continue regularly to reach nearly 6 million Syrians in need across the country per month. That assistance is delivered through regular programming and cross-line activities from Damascus, and cross-border assistance from Turkey and Jordan.

Let me touch briefly on cross-border activities, which have become a vital part of the response. Since cross-border operations began over two years ago, the United Nations has conducted 420 cross-border convoys, or nearly four a week on average, delivering health assistance sufficient for 9 million people, including vaccinations for 2 million people; food for 3 million people, many on a monthly basis; non-food items for almost 3 million people; and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies for over 2.5 million people. Assistance has been delivered to various parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Latakiya and Hama governorates from Turkey, and Dar'a and Al-Quneitra governorates from Jordan. Our efforts complement the critical role played by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations who provide assistance and services to millions more from neighbouring countries. We also continue to reach people via air. Since operations started several months ago, the World Food Programme has completed 153 airdrop rotations, dispatching 2,815 metric tons of food, nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies over Deir ez-Zor city. The United Nations has also completed 159 airlifts to Qamishli, delivering 5,660 metric tons of food, water, sanitation and hygiene supplies, nutrition, education, shelter and non-food-item assistance on behalf of humanitarian actors, including 61,500 full food rations.

At the berm along the Syrian-Jordanian border, which I visited in early September, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners have worked ceaselessly, together with the Jordanian authorities, to ensure the resumption of sustained aid operations to the many tens of thousands of women, men and children amassed at the border and in need of urgent lifesaving assistance. I am pleased to announce today that security and other arrangements have been finalized, and aid operations are set to commence tomorrow. I pay tribute to the cooperation I have personally had with the Jordanian State at the most senior levels to help enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the most challenging circumstances.

Unfortunately, I must report to the Council that, since the last reporting period, none — not one — of our inter-agency convoys was able to deliver aid across lines. Cross-line access requires detailed access negotiations with all sides to ensure security and allow aid to be delivered. Though our main interlocutor is, of course, the Syrian Government, we also work with the other parties to the conflict and the Member States that have influence over them — through the Humanitarian Task Force as well as bilaterally — but our efforts are increasingly met with delays, blockages and rejections. Every month we encounter new bureaucratic challenges that need to be navigated. We have dealt with late approvals, approvals with restrictions on the number of beneficiaries, delays in clearing trucks at the warehouse, negotiations over routes, medical supplies removed or not approved, and additional clearances beyond the agreed two-step process.

So far this month, we have three times navigated these hurdles, three times deployed convoys to reach those who are in need. Two of these convoys, both to Wadi Barada on 9 November and en route, in Rural Damascus, to Duma on 17 November, reached the final Government of Syria checkpoint before being forced to turn back when Syrian security forces, believed to be the Syrian Republican Guard, demanded the cleared containers be opened and searched. This is in clear breach of agreed protocol and a possible security threat for our convoys and aid workers. An earlier third convoy to Harbnafseh, in Rural Hama, scheduled for 1 November, was blocked by pro-Government armed elements while under way and also forced to turn back. Just yesterday, on 20 November, an inter-agency convoy to Rastan in northern rural Homs could not proceed owing to delays at the checkpoint in terms of approval to proceed, as well as shelling in the area once approval had finally been received.

As a result, as I said earlier, no inter-agency cross-line convoys have been able to deliver aid yet this month. We have now gone four months without delivering aid to anyone via an inter-agency cross-line convoy before 19 November. The result is that we are once again unlikely to reach more than a small portion of those whom we do receive formal approval to access.

Syrians have also been impacted by a series of anti-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) operations. This has resulted in initial displacement of 8,000 people in the north of Raqqah governorate. We are foreseeing the need to support over 400,000 people as operations progress further. In Al-Bab, anti-ISIL operations are taking place just a kilometre outside the city, and planning for a more immediate response for the over 100,000 people estimated to be in the city and surrounding area is in its final stages. Let me be clear — when people need our support, we are working and will continue to work day and night to try to reach them no matter who or where they are. That is not being virtuous; that is our job, providing the Council gives us the funds to do it and we can get safe access.

I have had little positive to report on the implementation of the resolutions of the Council as regards the humanitarian situation in Syria. Air strikes and shelling kill and injure more and more civilians, and protected civilian infrastructure is destroyed with implications that will resonate for years to come. Besiegement is increasing, people are going hungry. Schools and hospitals are being bombed. The United Nations is increasingly blocked from delivering to those most in need.

Most frustratingly, this human suffering is all unnecessary. There is no amount of suffering that will result in an end to the conflict. There is no amount of military operations that will see an end to the conflict. The only solution, as has been said countless times before, is a political solution. There are people here at this table and beyond with the influence to tell the Syrian Government we are not prepared to take no for an answer. If you are a petrified civilian patient in Aleppo tonight, you do not need to hear your own Government pray national sovereignty in aid to justify using that sovereignty to bomb its own people and that patient.

I am mandated to report to the Security Council every month on the implementation of Council resolutions relating to the protection of civilians and the humanitarian situation in Syria. It is worth, for the record and at the risk of being accused again of preaching, reiterating what the Council demanded of all the parties nearly three years ago in resolution 2139 (2014), including, first, to immediately put an end to all forms of violence; second, to immediately cease all attacks against civilians, as well as the indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas; third, to immediately lift sieges in populated areas; fourth, to promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines; fifth, to respect the principle of medical neutrality and facilitate free passage to all areas for medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies, including surgical items; sixth, to protect civilians and desist from attacks directed against civilian objects; and seventh the immediate end of the practices of arbitrary detention and torture of civilians.

This is neither a long nor an exceptional list. More importantly, this is a list of neither unreasonable nor unattainable demands. These are the basic elements of how parties to a conflict must operate under international humanitarian law. They are based on the most basic concepts of universal decency and humanity as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations to which the Member States that are parties and proxies have signed up and international humanitarian law, which applies to all parties, States and non-State actors alike, except, it would seem, in Syria. In Syria — contrary to international humanitarian law and in blatant rejection and defiance of the resolutions of

the Council — death, deprivation, violence, starvation, siege tactics and attacks on civilian-populated areas and civilian infrastructure continue and they continue without penalty to the perpetrators.

I have called over and over for strong action from the Council to back up its resolutions and to take action when they are ignored day in day out. Without such backing, words and resolutions have proven to have little meaning for Syrians. Without strong backing from each Council member, red lines will be crossed again and again; international humanitarian law will be trampled on; war crimes will be committed. And until there is action by the Council, there will be no accountability.

It is high time to act. The United Nations humanitarians and our partners will continue to do our part. The United Nations will push at all angles to reach those in need. As is my job, I will report the facts, advocate and give voice to those suffering without respite and whose lives have been shattered time and again. I will do so until the Council decides to unite once again to do its collective part and resolve to bring this Syrian horror to an end.

I hear the argument that the Council should not pass a resolution because it would be "premature". It is never, never too premature to save a life. It is never too soon for the Council to find a solution to this conflict and end the suffering of the Syrian people.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hoff.

Ms. Hoff: I speak to the Council today from the country office of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Damascus, from where I have led WHO's work in Syria for more than four years.

As the conflict and violence continue unabated, I have seen the worst of humankind — but more importantly, I have seen its best. I wish to begin by paying tribute to WHO's staff in Syria for their selflessness and determination and to the health-care workers, health partners and national non-governmental organizations working on the front line, who put their own lives at risk every day when they reach out to Syrians in need. Observing their dedication and the sacrifices they make has been the greatest privilege of my life.

It is also a privilege to speak to the Council today to describe the health situation inside Syria and the challenges it presents.

Before the conflict began, Syria had one of the most advanced health-care systems in the Middle East. As the country reached middle-income status, non-communicable diseases were becoming the predominant health concern. National vaccination coverage rates were 95 per cent. Syria's thriving pharmaceutical industry produced over 90 per cent of the country's medicines and exported its products to 53 countries.

Now, almost six years later, the picture is starkly different. According to the United Nations, well over 300,000 people have been killed and over 1.5 million have been injured since the conflict began. Each month, the number of people injured in the conflict rises to 30,000. Almost 5 million people have left the country, and just over 6 million have been internally displaced. Within Syria, 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Almost 5 million people live in besieged or hard-to-reach locations. These numbers are staggering. Health-care services have been devastated. Over half the country's public hospitals and primary health-care centres are either closed or only partially functioning. Almost two-thirds of all health professionals have left the country. Domestic production of medicines has dropped by two thirds and vaccination coveragerates have dropped by half.

What does that mean for the Syrian people? It means that they no longer have sustainable and reliable access to medicines for chronic diseases that are manageable with treatment but life-threatening without. It means that unvaccinated children are at risk of life-threatening childhood illnesses such as polio, which re-emerged in Syria in late 2013 before being eradicated anew, thanks to the concerted efforts of WHO and UNICEF. It means that Syrians with traumatic injuries do not receive timely treatment and die or suffer life-changing disabilities. It means that pregnant women do not have access to safe delivery. It means that huge numbers will suffer lifelong mental health problems related to prolonged, traumatic stress and displacement.

There have been repeated attacks on health-care facilities in Syria. Between January and September, there were 126 such attacks — almost two thirds of all attacks reported in countries with emergencies. In November alone, 11 hospitals were attacked in Aleppo,

Idlib, and Hama governorates, and some were attacked more than once. The direct targeting of health-care facilities is the most visible attack on the health-care system in Syria today, but there are others as well, including the militarization of health care facilities by several parties to the conflict, the targeting of health-care personnel, and the denial of medical and surgical supplies in many areas. Many patients are simply too afraid to travel to hospitals or clinics because they fear attacks, detention or abuse.

Attacks on health-care facilities and workers have an enormous impact on the communities they serve. For example, before three hospitals in rural western Aleppo were attacked last week, they provided more than 10,000 consultations and performed 1,500 surgeries per month.

First of all, denying ordinary citizens access to health care is an affront to our common humanity. Everyone has the right to health; it is inscribed in many international agreements, including the United Nations Declaration.

Secondly, those attacks are an unacceptable violation of international humanitarian law. Even in war, there are rules against such attacks, inscribed in the Geneva Conventions relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts. Respect for the neutrality of health facilities is one of our most important humanitarian principles and laws.

Thirdly, those attacks also represent something deeper. We all have a sense that there is something very special — even sacred — about providing health care to children, mothers, and the disabled. When health-care facilities providing care to the most vulnerable are targeted, something very precious is lost. We have not only violated a right and a law, we have lost our collective humanity.

WHO condemns in the strongest terms attacks on health-care facilities by any party, regardless of their affiliation. We condemn the inappropriate use of health facilities for any military or political purpose. As the global health agency, we take seriously our responsibility to speak out against these abuses whenever we can. We do so regularly. Nonetheless, our repeated calls for protecting health-care facilities and personnel always fall on deaf ears.

I would like to highlight other challenges that WHO and its partners face on a daily basis, notably our difficulties accessing hard-to-reach and besieged locations to deliver life-saving medicines and supplies. The Government routinely withholds its approval for the delivery of medical supplies and equipment, particularly surgical supplies, safe blood and blood products, to those locations. Moreover, the operating environment is now so dangerous that many health partners, especially those managing cross-border operations, have limited their activities.

Aleppo is the most visible face of Syria's suffering. It illustrates our difficulty in accessing besieged and hard-to-reach locations. Over a quarter of a million people are trapped in eastern Aleppo. All eight of its hospitals have either been put out of action or are only barely functioning. Its few remaining doctors are exhausted and overwhelmed. Eastern Aleppo is running out of food, water, and medicine. WHO, along with humanitarian partners, has painstakingly prepared detailed plans to evacuate the critically ill and injured and allow convoys to deliver supplies to eastern Aleppo. The Organization is awaiting the removal of all obstacles that would allow it to implement its plans. Western Aleppo is also under attack by non-State armed groups in eastern Aleppo. Hospitals in western Aleppo have been overwhelmed with wounded patients, following indiscriminate shelling. Scores of children were killed or injured when a mortar landed on a school in western Aleppo last Saturday.

Thus far in 2016, WHO has provided over 9 million medical treatments throughout Syria, through both cross-line deliveries from Damascus and cross-border deliveries from Gaziantep and Amman. Over one third of those supplies were delivered to hard-to-reach and besieged areas. For the first time in several years, WHO, along with its United Nations partners and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, was able to reach all besieged areas as part of United Nations inter-agency convoys. However, WHO is not able to reach those areas on a regular basis due to the lack of approval of several parties to the conflict. The Government withheld approval for the delivery of 75 tons of medical supplies — mainly to support surgical, anaesthesiology, laboratory and mental health services — to those areas. As a result, around 150,000 people were deprived of essential health care.

WHO has established a nationwide disease surveillance system to detect and respond to outbreak alerts. Fortunately, no major disease outbreaks have occurred in Syria. The Organization has trained over

16,000 health-care workers to help fill the gap left by the mass exodus of health professionals. WHO and UNICEF have supported the vaccination of millions of children against polio, measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. We have done all this with the sustained support of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and our national non-governmental organization partners. Lastly, WHO has used its position as the lead agency of the health sector to consistently advocate for the sanctity of health care and for sustained access to all parts of Syria to ensure that people are able to access the health care they need.

However, the situation is getting worse. WHO appeals to all members of the Security Council to use every last ounce of their influence to bring an immediate end to the suffering in Syria. We ask the Council to approve the establishment of a system to ensure that all parties have the coordinates of all humanitarian convoys and health facilities, and that all attacks are registered. We ask it to help end the attacks on health-care facilities and their personnel, regardless of the attackers' affiliation. We ask the Council to support sustained, unconditional access to all besieged and hard-to-reach areas. We ask the Council to help allow us to evacuate critically ill and wounded patients and their families from all areas and to ensure their safe passage.

I would like to reiterate that the WHO priority remains the people of Syria. As a humanitarian agency, we will continue our work to help to ensure that all people in all parts of the country have access to essential life-saving health care. We extend our deepest thanks to the donors that have so generously and steadfastly funded our operations in Syria during the past five years. We stand ready to give a more formal, in-depth briefing on those issues should the Council so desire.

Let me end by thanking you, Mr. President, and the members of the Security Council for their time and attention today.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Hoff for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): From month to month, Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien brings to our attention the daily horror in Syria, the daily horror that the civilian population faces — the children, the elderly, the sick. We thank Stephen for his briefing, a monthly briefing which is always painful to hear. I would also like to thank Ms. Hoff, the representative of the World Health Organization in Syria, for her equally heartfelt briefing.

We continue to bear witness of the worst armed conflict of the century and the greatest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, without being able to react to such barbarity as the entire world so urgently requests of us. A few days ago, in the Council, when referring to other horrific attacks being carried out, that time in Yemen, we again raised a series of questions, which I will now paraphrase from that other scenario.

We again return to these questions to ask ourselves: In the name of what god can one bomb hospitals? In defence of what principles can one bomb schools? What cause can be defended by deliberately using snipers to kill doctors and humanitarian personnel? What overarching value is being protected by bombing convoys that are clearly identified as humanitarian convoys? What morality teaches us that all of them — the hospitals, the schools, the convoys, the humanitarian personnel — are terrorists, and therefore legitimate targets for barrel bombs and so-called bunker-busting, which are so destructive and that continue causing destruction in Syria, in Aleppo and across the entire country?

On a similar note, we were horrified by Stephen's comments with regard to non-State armed groups indiscriminately bombing schools and residential areas. I would like to express the hope that in the next briefing Stephen could change that terminology on non-State armed groups. A group that bombs schools and residential neighbourhoods is not a non-State armed group, but a terrorist group. And it should be identified as such, because barbarity does not bear a distinction worthy of excusing it. Whoever does so is equally a terrorist.

We can make the point that responsibility for the crisis must be shared by the entire Security Council, given our inability to find a path towards a solution. But certainly by far the majority of the responsibility is with the members of the Organization and of the Council that participate directly in the bombings and that contribute to those attacks by way of an unlimited supply of weapons.

How long can we honestly tolerate that? For how much longer must the violence continue in this way — echoing what Stephen had to say about the

horror. It is our belief that there must be an immediate cessation of hostilities in the entire Syrian territory, particularly in the currently most affected areas. We reiterate one more time the seven points mentioned by Stephen in his recent briefing. It is time to end the violence and the bloodshed and to offer some hope to the Syrian population.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank the Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and the World Health Organization Country Director Hoff for their comprehensive and deeply disturbing briefings. I thank them, as always, for presenting us with the unvarnished and unbiased facts. Their remarks show once again what happens when the conflict continues and when Russia and the Al-Assad regime relentlessly pummel civilian areas from the air and regularly block deliveries of humanitarian aid on the ground.

In opposition-held eastern Aleppo, at least 289 people are reported to have been killed since Tuesday. One Syrian volunteer reported 180 air strikes on eastern Aleppo on Saturday alone. Think of what you were doing on Saturday and imagine being subjected to 180 air strikes while doing it. A horrifying video from eastern Aleppo affirms a shocking inhuman barrage on civilian neighbourhoods.

Of course, we will hear today from the Syrian regime and the Russian Federation a very different narrative. Russia will no doubt talk at length about how its unilateral pause in air strikes over eastern Aleppo was some kind of humanitarian gesture. The reality is that the Al-Assad regime and Russia are continuing their starve-get-bombed-or-surrender strategy in eastern Aleppo: bombing the city's 275,000 residents and pausing to see if any will surrender to the Al-Assad regime — a regime that, as both we and the Syrian people know, has systematically tortured those who have found themselves under its custodial authority. Would any of us trust that regime with the lives of our family members, with our kids, with our parents, with our siblings?

Consider that when Russia paused its air strikes over eastern Aleppo they did so unilaterally, meaning that they never deigned to coordinate their efforts with the United Nations or any other organization actually providing aid. That was not a humanitarian gesture.

Consider that during this pause in strikes Russia and the Al-Assad regime never gave the United Nations permission to deliver a single parcel of food or medicine to eastern Aleppo — not one. That was not a humanitarian gesture.

Consider that Russian war regime planes dropped leaflets warning the people of eastern Aleppo to leave or be annihilated, as many of us discussed at our previous briefing (see S/PV.7795).

Consider that residents of eastern Aleppo reportedly received text messages warning people to flee before a "strategically planned assault" would happen.

Consider that last month (see S/PV.7785) Russia vetoed a draft resolution (S/2016/846) in the Security Council meant to end atrocities in Aleppo.

Those also were not humanitarian gestures.

Remember that eastern Aleppo is not an isolated case, it is part of a countrywide strategy across Syria. Russia and the Al-Assad regime are waging a campaign that includes sieges, the blocking of humanitarian aid, the indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas and the use of barrel bombs.

Therefore, we members of the Council need to separate fact from fiction today. When we renewed the Joint Investigative Mechanism for Syria last week (see S/PV.7815), I and many members spoke of how we could not uphold the norm against chemical weapons use if we did not know which party was using chemical weapons. In that regard again, to uphold the humanitarian demands of the Council, we need to speak frankly and very specifically about which parties are responsible for the suffering of the Syrian people. That means condemning the atrocities committed by terrorist organizations like Jabhat Al-Nusra and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) — which the United States has done and will continue to do — but it also means telling the truth about Russia and the Al-Assad regime's actions. Today I will focus on just two features of regime and Russian terror.

First, the Al-Assad regime and Russia must stop the campaign of attacks that has destroyed countless schools, hospitals, homes and other civilian infrastructure. Take just some of the recent air strikes. Between 13 and 15 November, five hospitals in Syria were struck — five hospitals in two days. After air strikes hit another hospital in eastern Aleppo on 18 November, every hospital in that city is now reportedly out of service due to attacks by Russia and the Al-Assad regime: every single hospital, serving a population of 275,000 civilians, is out of commission.

On 6 November, an attack by the Al-Assad regime on a Damascus suburb reportedly killed at least six children in a kindergarten.

The United States recognizes that it is not just the Al-Assad regime and its allies that are causing civilians to suffer in Syria. We condemn, in the strongest terms, all indiscriminate shelling by opposition forces into the civilian areas of western Aleppo. Those attacks have reportedly caused more than 60 casualties since 1 November. We agree with Russia that there can be no justification for such attacks, but I ask: Will Russia condemn — here in the Chamber today, or any day — even a single air strike by the Al-Assad regime? Choose any of the hospitals that the Al-Assad regime has destroyed, or any of the schools. Will Russia ever condemn its ally, Bashar Al-Assad, here at the Council for a single one of those attacks? We have been attending meetings like this one for more than five years. Despite all of the carnage inflicted by the regime partners, they have uttered not one critical, nor even skeptical word.

Today I would like to specify some of the names of those involved since 2011 in killing and injuring civilians by conducting air and ground-based Syrian Government military assaults on cities, residential areas and civilian infrastructure. The United States will not let those who have commanded units involved in these actions hide anonymously behind the facade of the Al-Assad regime. We know who some of these commanders are. They include Major General Adeeb Salameh, Brigadier General Adnan Aboud Hilweh, Major General Jawdat Salbi Mawas, Colonel Suheil Al-Hassan and Major General Tahir Hamid Khalil.

Russia and the Al-Assad regime's merciless attacks must end and those behind such attacks must know that we and the international community are watching their actions and documenting their abuses, and that one day they will be held accountable. I know right now today, with the wind at their backs, these individuals feel impunity. However, so did Slobodan Milošević, Charles Taylor and countless war criminals before them. Today's atrocities are well-documented, and the civilized world's memories are long.

Secondly, the Al-Assad regime must end the suffering and torture in detention centres throughout Syria. The regime continues to imprison tens of thousands of Syrians, including women, children, doctors, humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and journalists, subjecting many to torture, sexual violence and inhumane conditions. Here is how a Syrian journalist named Shiar described his experience at military intelligence branch No. 235:

> "They had me stand on a barrel and they tied rope around my wrists. Then they took away the barrel. There was nothing below my feet. They were dangling in the air. They brought three sticks; they were hitting me everywhere. After they were done beating me with wooden sticks, they took the cigarettes. They were putting them out all over my body. It felt like a knife excavating my body, cutting me apart."

We know where torture has taken place and where it continues to take place: facilities that include military intelligence branches numbers 215, 227, 235 and 251; the air force intelligence investigation branch in Mezzeh military airport; the Sednaya Prison and the Tishreen and Hharasta military hospitals. The commanding officers and prison officials who work at those facilities should know, too, that the international community is watching and that they, too, will one day be held accountable. They include Major General Jamil Hassan, Brigadier General Abdul Salam Fajr Mahmoud, Brigadier General Ibrahim Ma'ala, Colonel Qusay Mihoub, Brigadier General Salah Hamad, Brigadier General Shafik Massa, Major General Rafiq Shehadeh and Hafez Makhlouf. The United States will not forget the cases of the many Syrians who have suffered so much at the hands of individuals like those, and we will continue fighting to hold them accountable for their hateful crimes.

I wish to stress that the United States recognizes that non-State groups have also committed many abuses against detainees, including torture. We condemn any group using such tactics in the strongest terms and we demand that immediate access be granted to monitor all detention facilities, whether regime, terrorist or opposition. ISIL atrocities are in a category unto themselves, which is why the United States leads a 67-member coalition to defeat that terrorist organization.

Let me conclude: in January, the United Nations and the world raised the alarm that the people in the community of Madaya, besieged by allies of the Al-Assad regime, were starving. Today we have reports of starvation again. Save The Children reported recently that Madaya is now also seeing an increse in child suicide attempts, something virtually unheard of in the town before.

One of those kids is a 15-year-old named Omar. Omar told a reporter recently,

> "There is nothing left for me here, and I felt the easiest thing to do was to kill myself. I tried to throw myself from the balcony, but it wasn't high enough."

Omar's father is in jail. His mom had to leave Madaya but left Omar behind, so he did not get recruited into the Government's security forces. Omar says,

> "There is nothing to eat. We are being strangled here. It is like I am in prison".

Omar has one other thought; one that you might expect from any teenager:

> "I miss my mum waking meup in the morning."

We — not just members of the Security Council, but all States Members of the United Nations — must be clear that the Al-Assad regime, Russia and their allies are responsible for that destruction, which is both physical destruction and, for countless children like Omar, psychological destruction. In the face of that destruction and overwhelming suffering, the perpetrators must know that the pursuit of a military solution is as foolish as it is brutal. Attacks on civilians fuel terrorism; they do not defeat terrorism. The perpetrators must also know that, like their ignominious predecessors throughout history, they will face judgment for their crimes.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for his comprehensive briefing. I also thank Ms. Elizabeth Hoff, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Syria, for accepting Japan's proposal to make a briefing to the Security Council at such short notice, and through her I thank the dedicated personnel of the WHO, who have been working hard in such a difficult environment.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is devastating. Over the course of the weekend, we continued to hear news of the terrible attacks and casualties in Aleppo and elsewhere. Frustration is building over the inability to address the humanitarian crisis, but we must not abandon our efforts. We appreciate that some members of the Security Council have taken the initiative to advance discussions on the humanitarian situation. We are also aware of efforts by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) co-Chairs and regional stakeholders after the Lausanne meeting in October. However, what we need now are actual improvements on the ground. We need an agreement either from the Security Council or the ISSG that will truly change the situation in Syria.

Mr. O'Brien's briefing presented us with a picture of the desperate situation in Syria. Even during the pause in aerial attacks by the Syrian Government and Russia, the United Nations could not deliver any assistance to the people of eastern Aleppo. As Mr. O'Brien explained, even single attempts at humanitarian access face countless obstacles on the ground. Today is not the first time that we have heard that discouraging story. However, the situation is now so severe that not a single convoy has achieved access to Aleppo.

I have one simple question: If those States that have influence, especially ISSG members, exert the utmost influence on the parties on the ground, might we be able to overcome some of the impediments to humanitarian access? If not, what can be done to ensure that the necessary actions are achieved on the ground? That is a question that needs to be answered.

I am sure I speak for all of my colleagues when I say that the Security Council was grateful to receive such an extensive briefing from Ms. Hoff, who is following the situation in Damascus closely. We highly commend WHO efforts in delivering lifesaving treatments to the Syrian people and strengthening health services, including measures to counter children's diseases. Today's briefing described a truly devastating situation and made it absolutely clear that Syria's medical sector is in huge and imminent need of major rehabilitation.

We are shocked by the sheer number of medical facilities that have been attacked in 2016. Japan reiterates its position that the parties to the armed conflict have the obligation to respect international humanitarian law in all circumstances, and violators of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. The Permanent representative of the United States has just mentioned specific names. If the lack of clarity on the attackers is making it difficult to take measures to effectively protect medical facilities, the Security Council should request a Secretariat investigation and other necessary measures.

This monthly meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria must not simply be a venue for us to express our deep concern about civilians and medical personnel who are facing devastating situations. We need to take

action and achieve concrete results. There is no time to spare. I look forward to a constructive discussion in the informal consultations that are to follow.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien and Ms. Elizabeth Hoff for their briefings, which once again give cause for indignation. I would like to pay tribute to the work that they and their teams are carrying out. Their briefings depict a relentless spiral of violence that makes it impossible for humanitarian actors to carry out their work and condemns hundreds of thousands of people to hunger and death. I would like to underscore three points today.

First, simple words cannot describe the seriousness of the humanitarian situation in Aleppo today. Eastern Aleppo is the double victim of a barrage of fire and a siege that is fitting of the Middle Ages. Both target civilians and constitute war crimes. According to the information available to us, hundreds of people, including many children, have been killed since last Tuesday as a result of bombings and uninterrupted shelling, which means that rescue teams are unable to intervene to rescue the wounded from the rubble. Those conditions make it impossible for humanitarian workers to carry out their work by delivering humanitarian aid and carrying out medical evacuations. No convoy has been able to reach eastern Aleppo since July. The humanitarian aid reserves in warehouses in western Aleppo have now been exhausted. Today, more than 275,000 civilians in eastern Aleppo are besieged as a result of the incessant bombing of the regime and its supporters. They have no food, medical equipment or access to essential services. The Special Envoy unequivocally stated that the fall of eastern Aleppo will trigger an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and could force more than 200,000 people to flee to Turkey.

Secondly, the people of Aleppo are not the only population suffering in Syria. The regime is besieging civilians across the country and is refusing to abide by the necessary monthly humanitarian aid convoy authorizations, as part of a deliberate obstructive policy to force the population to flee and its opponents to submit. In November, the United Nations submitted 38 requests to access 900,000 people in 25 besieged or hard-to-reach areas. One third of those requests were rejected without any valid justification citing humanitarian aid principles. In Duma, as Mr. O'Brien pointed out to us, a major convoy that was to deliver humanitarian aid to 70,000 people has been held up at the last check point maintained by the regime. Syrian authorities have demanded convoys to unload their cargo, despite the fact that they are affixed with the necessary clearance. Medical and health supplies are still deliberately removed from convoys, and 45,000 medical supplies were removed and destroyed in October. Aid continues to be hindered and destroyed and the population continues to go hungry and untreated; and all the while the regime continues to impose its demands on the United Nations and its partners. I recall that the Syrian authorities are expressly bound to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, an obligation that includes ensuring swift, safe and unhindered access to the entire population in Syria, in line with Security Council resolutions.

Thirdly, the regime and its allies continue their illegal deliberate attacks on hospitals and medical staff, actions that constitute war crimes. Five hospitals were attacked between 3 to 15 November, leading to at least two deaths and 19 injuries, including six medical staff. As the Secretary-General pointed out yesterday, there is no longer a single hospital functioning in eastern Aleppo today. The WHO has reported 126 attacks of that nature in Syria since the beginning of the year. Daily action of that kind in Syria cannot go unpunished, and full light must be shed on all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law that undermine the claims of the regime that it is seeking to provide for the Syrian people and the future of country.

Over the past two months, France has unceasingly sought to hammer home a message that I repeat again today. The regime and its supporters must immediately and definitively cease their bombings of Aleppo and allow humanitarian actors to swiftly deliver emergency aid to the entire population that stands in need today. That call is shared by a very large majority of members of this Council.

France calls once again on those members of the Council that are involved in the combat and have influence on the regime to break the ongoing downward course in that devasted land, which will only usher in decades instability, violence and terrorism. Let us not deceive ourselves. It is not just a total war-strategy that has been triggered in Aleppo. It is not only a humanitarian catastrophe, but also a strategic error. That strategy will mechanically lead to the partition of Syria. It will exacerbate the pace towards radicalization and it will strengthen Da'esh and terrorism in general. In Aleppo, horror and terror are two sides of the same coin.

On behalf of France, I would like to underscore once more the absolute urgency of immediately ending the bombardments and the war, to seek together a political solution. That is the only possible way out of the tragedy, and it is the responsibility of the Security Council, whose credibility is heavily involved.

Mr. Ryecroft (United Kingdom): I thank Stephen O'Brien and Elizabeth Hoff for their powerful briefings.

The United Nations is working tirelessly to help millions of men, women and children in desperate need in Syria. The Syrian regime and Russia, in contrast, seem to be determined to increase that number, make their suffering even worse and prolong the barbaric conflict. As Stephen has spelled out, that is most clearly seen in Aleppo. Hundreds of thousands of people are enduring hell, living without the most basic supplies, living — if it can be called that — in fear of barrel bombs, shelling or worse. They have gone months without receiving a single delivery of aid or a single box of medical supplies. And yet, thanks to the United Nations there are trucks full of supplies ready and waiting to go, ready and waiting to save lives.

The Syrian regime, which Russia chooses to back, is deliberately preventing the food and medicine from reaching those in need. Russia has the power to allow the aid, so desperately needed, into the city. If it does not, the world will hold it to account for the barbarous result. I urge the Russian Federation to persuade the Syrian regime to let the United Nations do its job and get aid into Aleppo.

But the tragedy is that even that will not be enough. Not content with starving thousands of innocent civilians, the Assad regime is pummelling them with sortie after sortie of devastating air strikes. As we have heard, dozens have been killed and injured in the past few days alone, including through two vile attacks on the same children's hospital. Elizabeth has confirmed that there are no more functioning hospitals left in eastern Aleppo. That is the result of deliberate aerial attacks on those hospitals and is part of a systematic campaign to remove even the most basic of services left in the city. And yet, Russia has said: "The allegedly bombed hospitals in Aleppo exist only in the imagination". Please. We all know what needs to happen. I will repeat it in the Chamber again, and I will keep doing so until I am blue in the face if it means shifting the policy of the Russian Federation.

First, stop the war crimes. Attacks on hospitals, civilians, schools and vital infrastructure are attacks that serve no military purpose. How can the bombing of the school, like the one in Idlib, be justified? How can the killing of 20 children and 3 teachers be justified? As Elbio Rosselli said, there is no god and no principle that can possibly justify such an attack. We all want to counter terrorism in Syria, but attacks on schools and hospitals are not counter-terrorist operations. So we support Staffan de Mistura's request to send a United Nations verification team to investigate the attacks on hospitals in Aleppo.

Secondly, aid needs to get in. We commend the United Nations on its humanitarian response plan for Aleppo. All parties need to implement it fully and immediately. But the issue goes far beyond Aleppo. As Staffan said, the United Nations now puts the number of those living in besieged areas at almost one million people. Aid must reach those people. Unless we see an improvement, November will be the worst month yet for effots to deliver aid to besieged and hard-to-reach areas across Syria. Not one single humantarian convoy has reached any of those areas on the United Nations plan this month.

Those are two simple steps, and they must be taken if we are to have a chance of that most elusive third step — political talks that will bring an end to this horrorific conflict. As I have said many times before, Russia has a unique role to play in all three of those steps: to persuade the regime to end its destructive military approach, to allow full humanitarian access to all beiseged areas and to commit to a political settlement to end the brutal war.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): We thank Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs O'Brien and Ms. Hoff for their briefings.

Unfortunately, we have to accommodate the inability of the Security Council and the international community to make progress regarding Syria. The ongoing situation in the city of Aleppo is most distressing. Last month we witnessed a dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian situation in that historic city, leaving the vast majority of the population without access to basic necessities and life-saving assistance. The horrific fighting has caused innumerous deaths and injuries among the civilian population. The destruction of essential infrastructure, such as hospitals, clinics and ambulances, and the lack of medical staff have exponentially increased the

number of casualties, wounded and displaced persons, absolutely overwhelming the ability of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to carry out their duties.

Meanwhile, the Security Council remains unable to reach any semblance of unity to express a common position on the issue, while witnessing, on a daily basis, the current violations of the most basic tenets of international human rights and humanitarian law. The latest escalation of fighting in Eastern Aleppo is most regrettable. It is urgent that we consider ways to set aside political differences and reset our focus on a new round of political talks. While we understand the geopolitical implications for the major stakeholders in the region and beyond, we cannot accept the continuous suffering of innocent civilians. We therefore support the draft resolution submitted by Egypt, New Zealand and Spain calling on all the parties to cease fighting for at least 10 days in order to allow and facilitate immediate, safe, sustained and unhindered humanitarian access to all of Aleppo by the United Nations and its implementing partners. In our view, that would constitute an important first step towards a resumption of negotiations, which in the long term represents the most appropriate solution to the conflict.

We would like to once again call on the members of the Security Council to set aside their political differences and rivalries and act in the interests of international peace and security. The Middle East has been affected by conflict and humanitarian crises for too long, and the repercussions of our inability to help solve the problems there are being felt all over the world. The real influence of certain regional Powers, as well as that which some members of the Council are able to exert on the parties concerned, should be used to advance a political solution to the conflict instead of supplying weapons and lethal equipment to the sides in the conflict in the search for an impossible military outcome.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): We appreciate both of today's briefings, which only add to the extremely gloomy picture we have all been seeing for many months now. The situation in Syria is a cause of continuing concern. After six years of conflict there, we are still not seeing any viable progress towards a political solution. The forces of the regime and its allies continue to pursue their goal of changing the military balance and creating new realities on the ground. If the recent history of the conflict is any guide, the fragile logic is doomed to failure.

In the past three months we have seen four offensives and counter-offensives, with the sides in the conflict taking, losing and retaking the ground. There is no winner in this game, but the losers are obvious — they are the civilians, who continue to suffer from the warmongering of hawks. We agree with condemnation by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 16 November stating that between 13 and 16 November six hospitals in Syria were attacked in aerial bombardments. Those numbers will increase, given the additional firepower of the reinforcements employed by the Russian Federation and the active participation of the *Admiral Kuznetsov* naval battle group in the bombing of Aleppo, Idlib and Homs.

It may sound like a joke, but yesterday the Twitter feed of the Russian Embassy in the United Arab Emirates stated that "The allegedly destroyed hospitals in #Aleppo exist only in the mind of the Department of State's spokesman John Kirby." We are also deeply concerned about recent information from WHO that all the hospitals in the besieged rebel-held areas of eastern Aleppo are now incapacitated after days of heavy air strikes.

President Al-Assad has recently been very vocal in the media. In an interview on 16 November with Rádio e Televisão de Portugal, he made it very clear that he continues to view all the forces in Aleppo and other embattled provinces as terrorists. Unfortunately, we are seeing some attempts to reconsider the role of the Syrian President in the future of the country. The changing of the great Powers' policies towards a political transition in Syria could provoke yet more instability throughout the Middle East.

We underscore the urgent need for accountability in Syria. We welcome the fact that the United Nations Board of Inquiry has begun its investigation of the attack on 19 September on the United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent relief operation to Urum al-Kubra, and we look forward to its conclusions. We also call for an immediate inquiry into the killing on 26 October of children and other civilians in a school complex in the village of Haas in Idlib province. The perpetrators of such horrific crimes appear to act in the confidence that there will be no accountability and justice. They must be proved wrong.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): To begin with, I would like to say that we greatly appreciate the work of the United Nations humanitarian personnel in Syria, and we actively support them. There is no need to convince us of the importance of assisting the United Nations, and Ambassador Rycroft's suggestion to that effect is dishonest. What is he talking about?

First of all, we should look at what is really going on in a professional manner. Thanks to the continued efforts of Russian experts, the number of residential areas in Syria covered by the truce has risen to 961. Seventy armed opposition groups have officially joined the ceasefire regime. Talks with armed-group commanders are going on in a number of provinces. Russia continues to provide the people of the Syrian Arab Republic with substantive humanitarian assistance.

We continue our persistent quest to find ways to improve the situation in Aleppo. As we all know, the eastern districts of that strategically important city are held by armed groups led by the terrorist organization Jabhat Al-Nusra. The long-promised separation of the moderate opposition from adherents of Al-Nusra has yet to happen. We continue to be showered with data showing shrinking numbers for Al-Nusra, based on information from the press and even from opposition social networks. What kind of sources are those? That helps to maintain an intolerable situation in which thousands of peaceful residents are held hostage. What does that represent? The desire to preserve a major centre of terrorist-led anti-Government resistance at any cost? There are extremely disturbing reports of the brutal suppression of demonstrations by peaceful residents demanding that the radicals leave the city. Our professional bilateral contacts with the American side are currently continuing, and we hope they will enable us to come up with an appropriate solution.

At a Security Council meeting in October (see S/PV.7785) we had a detailed discussion of the reasons for the disruption of the humanitarian operation, owing to sabotage by illegal armed groups and the so-called local council against a backdrop of — and this is putting it mildly — inadequate action on the part of certain United Nations staff, of which they are well aware and, as I understand it, which they now regret. We cannot permit any repeat of that kind of scenario. From now on, let us see the insurgents, including those of Ahrar al-Sham and Nour al-Din al-Zenki, publicly affirm — and their sponsors guarantee — their willingness to cooperate with the United Nations agencies and enable humanitarian operations to be conducted without obstacles or artificial constraints. There can be no bartering of the sick and injured for food and medicines for the insurgents.

We also expect to see similar efforts on the part of the local council in eastern Aleppo. We have a right to hope in particular that our English colleagues, or the French — who have received these people in Paris at the highest level — will help in that department. That is what they should be talking about — about their own efforts, not about what they want from Russia, what Russia should do, what Russia can do. They should be talking about their own efforts. We are States, after all. What can be asked of Russia? What should Russia do? After all, we have found out that there are two such councils, existing through infusions from abroad. One of them is functioning in Gazientep. The other is in Syria, outside of Aleppo. Neither one of them is responsible for law and order. It is hardly possible to consider the councils representative bodies of local Governments in eastern Aleppo. They are not even in Aleppo. Formally speaking, their mandates have ended. Let us not forget that.

We have also noticed that every month we find out through United Nations reports about an increasing number of people in besieged areas. Invariably that is due to the population centres that are under the control of armed groups. If the purpose of such mathematical distortions is to present the Syrian Government as the main party responsible for suffering, then it is an unacceptable approach. It is not clear how such calculations are carried out, because United Nations evaluation missions are not allowed access to besieged territories. Nonetheless, those missions regularly provide statistics based on nothing.

At the same time, the number of people who are in need of humanitarian assistance in territories under the control of the Government is constantly underestimated. For example, an interesting instance of such underrepresentation is from the bulletin for 20 April, which stated the number of people in Deir ez-Zor — which is besieged by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — to be 200,000. On 3 May, the number was 110,000. We follow what is happening there very closely because, unlike what has been hypocritically described by some as an operation of support, we are conducting a counter-terrorism operation in the country. Yes, we are supporting the legitimate Government.

The most recent information about attacks against civilian infrastructure is pure propaganda. It is not objectively verified. According to that information, the only thing that Syrians do is bomb health facilities and increase the intensiveness of such attacks right before Security Council meetings. If we amassed all the Internet data on attacks against health facilities, we might be surprised by the number of those facilities — which pre-war Syria never had. At the same time, it is continuously stated that there are no functioning health facilities remaining. That always happens immediately prior to a Security Council meeting.

As a result of the shelling by the fighters in eastern Aleppo, the United Nations has left western Aleppo. Why is that something that we are not talking about today? Why is it that the attacks against the Embassies in Damascus are not being condemned? In the absence of the United Nations in Aleppo, information is gathered from God knows where — from various countries and from non-governmental organizations that are outside of Syria. Data is being intentionally falsified. Let me point out that information is never provided about the location of so-called mobile hospitals in areas under the control of rebel fighters who are supported by Western partners. When we asked for an honest exchange of information, that was what we specifically had in mind.

My colleague from the United States, Ms. Power, is absolutely right. Let me say again that as of 18 October the Russian Air Force has not conducted airstrikes on Aleppo or within the 10 kilometres surrounding it. We are waiting for the moderate opposition to dissociate themselves from the terrorist groups. That is an urgent task.

I must say that because of the efforts of our partners — today's statements are testimony to that — the work of the Council on the Syrian settlement is increasingly moving into the virtual sphere, which has nothing in common with the realities of the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Let me recall, for example, the many appeals to the Governments of Syria and Russia. But who is going to work with those who were brought into Syria and provided with weapons and money? Can we imagine what it must be like for a secular Syria, which has a long tradition of coexistence of various faiths and cultures, to witness the presence of foreign fighters? Let us assess that professionally. What kind of significance does that have for them? Who is going to be working with those people? It seems that no one will. First, the conflict was brought into existence. Now there is fear of the conflict and actions are being dictated by that fear. That is what is happening.

Some want to put the whole world into a tribunal. Those parties have reached the point where they have listed the names of Syrian officers and generals. However, if they claim to be impartial, where are the names of the terrorists? Who is going to deal with them? Maybe those parties have become frightened of them. Let us try to not be hypocritical. Those parties have forgotten about their own golden standard on the presumption of innocence by pre-emptively identifying those responsible, which is something that ought to only be decided by a legal process. That is elementary, and yet I find myself saying it in the Security Council.

Let me also say that I have listened very carefully to my colleagues with whom I work on a daily basis on various issues. Their harshness tells me that their plans are not working, that something went wrong and that they are incapable of removing yet another regime and destroying another country in the Middle East. They cannot do that. However, it is never too late to stop trying. The doors of cooperation remain open.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Hoff for their briefings.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela expresses its concern about the humanitarian situation in Syria. We pay tribute to the efforts of humanitarian agencies that carry out extraordinary and noble work to assist millions of Syrians in spite of high levels of risk in such a raging conflict. We are pleased to hear that humanitarian agencies were able to send 28 lorries to the Duma area yesterday. We also welcome the news that the funds to continue humanitarian aid for approximately 2.8 million people have been procured.

Humanitarian aid must be balanced, effective and impartial. Therefore we believe that, although the humanitarian situation in Aleppo requires the international community to provide an immediate response, we also must bear in mind that assistance to other parts of the country has continued, despite the difficulties posed by the armed conflict.

Terrorism is the cause of the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria. The acts caried out by groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), the Al-Nusra Front and their allies are a threat to international peace and security, which is why they

must be combated in strict adherence to international law. In the case of Aleppo, the humanitarian pauses offered by the authorities as of 18 October were blocked by militants of Al-Nusra Front and partner groups. Those groups prevented civilians from evacuating the affected areas. Recently we have observed that in eastern Aleppo people are rising up against the terrorist groups, which not only use them as human shields but also deny them the little food there is.

In the light of what is happening, why has the so-called moderate opposition not clearly and tangibly decoupled itself from those terrorist groups? It seems they are not so moderate as they present themselves to the international community. It is evident that complicity between the terrorist groups in eastern Aleppo and the so-called moderate opposition is a serious obstacle to peace in Syria. There is an ongoing threat of ISIS in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. Both regions present a real threat tothe delivery of humanitarian aid. Denying the civilian population access to humanitarian aid has become part of the daily practice of ISIS and the Al-Nusra Front. Those terrorist groups and their partners have become looming threats to peace and stability in the region. We must counter their influence with all available and necessary measures, while strictly adhering to international law

We would like to raise a similar concern about the destruction of basic infrastructure and services, such as hospitals, water distribution services and electricity substations. As Ms. Elizabeth Hoff of the World Health Organization pointed out a few minutes ago, before the war broke out Syria had one of the most advanced health-care systems in the Middle East. However, owing to the war, which has raged for six years now and which has been financed from abroad, the health-care system lies, unfortunately, in ruins. We therefore call upon the parties and those who have influence on the parties to resume political negotiations as swiftly as possible without attaching preconditions to the aforementioned resumed negotiations so that we can work towards a solution to the conflict, which has caused so much suffering to the people of Syria. The prolongation of the conflict will only cause more suffering and more destruction for the Syrian population.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien and Ms.Elizabeth Hoff for their briefings. I commend them and their staff for their courage and determination in persevering in such difficult and dispiriting conditions.

Mr. O'Brien asked the question as to why the Council is holding this meeting. We could have asked the same question during each of the past 12 months. The Council has been powerless in dealing with the essential problem in Syria. Important work has been done in addressing the particular menace of chemical weapons, and, as Mr. O'Brien has reminded us, important humanitarian assistance has been able to get through under the cross-border arrangements called for by the Council. But, as we have heard today, cross-front-line access, also called for by the Council, has been systematically denied, blocked, obstructed and obfuscated by the Syrian Government or forces allied with it. And our resolution 2286 (2016) on attacks on health-care workers or hospitals has been blatantly ignored, as we have been told today.

Most fundamentally, the Council has been powerless in dealing with the most serious threat facing the Syrian people, namely, the besiegement and bombardment of civilians, most notably in Aleppo, and, as we have been reminded again today, throughout other parts of Syria, as well. I am not going to revisit the horrors that flow from our inaction. They have been described more than adequately by Mr. O'Brien, Ms. Hoff and others. Looking around the Chamber today, I felt I can see in the faces of my colleagues some of the shame that I feel myself. Instead of responding to the clear breaches of international peace and security, the Council has been largely just a witness to the horrors that have been described to us again today.

The situation in Syria is horrible and complex, and many players, external and internal, are playing roles there. A particularly unhelpful role is being played by the terrorist groups. However, leaving aside the area occupied and controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, no amount of diplomatic diversion can hide the fact that we are witness to the destruction of a country and its people, led by its own Government and supported by a permanent member of the Security Council.

As is well-known, after last month's vetos (see S/PV.7785), New Zealand tried to advance a draft resolution that would have demanded an end to all attacks that risked death or injury to civilians in Syria, especially in Aleppo. It was deeply frustrating that the Council could not unite around a proposition as simple and basic as that. Nonetheless, New Zealand, together with Egypt and Spain, is again putting forward a draft resolution that is similarly modest in ambition.

Indeed, we consider it to be the bare minimum that the Council can do. It approaches the conflict through a humanitarian lens, establishes a 10-day pause in Aleppo to allow the United Nations and its partners to get aid in and sick people out, and re-establishes the cessation of hostilities in the remainder of the country. It also begins to deal with some very difficult issues, namely, separation and the political process, but it does not try to provide all the answers. We are aware that there are conversations going on elsewhere. The draft resolution is intended to be complementary to those conversations. We are committed to taking this draft resolution forward, and we urge all Council members to support us in words and in action.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): We thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien and Ms. Elizabeth Hoff for their briefings. All too often, the briefings continue to depict a brutal and terrifying reality arising from our inability to end the sufferings of Syrians in eastern Aleppo. It pains us to listen to Mr. O'Brien's horrifying account of the miserable plight of the innocent. Just five days ago, a resumption of the intense blitz on the besieged city pulverized the brief lull in the aerial bombardment and the relative calm in Aleppo, and scores of innocent persons were killed yet again.

We are told that there can be no compromise in the fight against terrorism. The deliberate bombings of hospitals make it seem, however, that nothing was meant to be spared. The fact that all the hospitals in Aleppo are in ruins is utterly abhorrent. We are appalled that civilians, especially women and children, had to be treated in field hospitals set up in homes near the front lines just to avoid being targeted. The temporary and makeshift hospitals can never be adequate, and the desparate situation is only made worse by the acute shortages and lack of medical supplies and equipment, as well as by the lack of a medical-evacuation exercise since the middle of this year.

The resumptions of air strikes and the bombardment of Aleppo last week meant that any hope for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians has diminished. We are concerned by what was reported by Mr. O'Brien earlier that the last remaining food rations are now being handed out, and that there will be nothing left to distribute next week without a resupply. We fear that without a resupply, his next report will contain accounts of mass deaths owing to starvation, something that we could have helped to avoid. It is regrettable that no humanitarian access has been granted to the United Nations in the past four weeks despite the relative calm in Aleppo. As winter approaches, we call on all conflicting parties to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid through a coordinated approach with the United Nations. It is an exercise that the United Nations has repeatedly pronounced its readiness to undertake immediately.

Hostilities in Aleppo aside, my delegation is also concerned at the military escalations in Idlib and Homs. While Malaysia shares the notion of eliminating terrorism and its threat, such a fight must not be at the expense of innocent civilians. The senseless collective punishment must be stopped. Several schools have reportedly been targeted by air strikes in Idlib, more just yesterday. The targeting of schools only serves to indicate that the war is about inflicting maximum sufferings on the vulnerable. Children, some of whom were leaving their school compounds, were killed. Those incidents must be investigated, with the perpetrators being held to account.

Before I conclude, we join other Council members in calling for actions on the United Nations plan for eastern Aleppo and Syria as a whole. We have an obligation to reverse the depressing developments for the sake of innocent Syrians. We have before us a proposal by the humanitarian penholders for a Council response to the situation in Syria, and we must make this fourth attempt count for something. We urge those who could make the difference to listen to the voice of their conscience and to halt the atrocities.

We pay our tributes to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and all humanitarian actors on the ground for their tireless and brave efforts in alleviating the sufferings of the men, women and children of Syria. Our thoughts and condolences also go to the family of Mr. Husein Muhsen, a humanitarian staff member of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees inthe Near East, who was killed in an air strike while assisting Palestinian refugees in Khan Eshieh refugee camp just a week ago. The tenacity of our comrades in Syria must at the very least be rewarded with a signal that the Council cares. It has a duty to uphold, and it needs to respond to the deteriorating situation in Syria. It must stop the senseless killing and destruction.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My thanks go, above all, to Stephen and to Elizabeth for their respective briefings and for their excellent

work. I should like also to thank the Ambassador of New Zealand, who described very clearly the joint efforts that Egypt, New Zealand and Spain are making to ensure the adoption of a series of measures aimed at halting the fighting in Aleppo so that humanitarian aid can be distributed inside the city.

Indeed, given the humanitarian disaster depicted by Stephen O'Brien, no simple message in and of itself can be enough. We have heard today about deliberate attacks on doctors and hospitals such as the ones reported by Médecins Sans Frontières this weekend, which destroyed the last paediatric clinic in eastern Aleppo. Violations of international humanitarian law occur daily.

My delegation is not resigned to this situation. We must do more than just condemn, though it certainly seems difficult. We support the efforts of the Special Envoy, who was in Damascus over the weekend seeking a solution to the most pressing problems facing Syria. We trust that the Geneva talks will bear fruit. However, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibility to halt the country's slide into violence and bring about a new cessation of hostilities. It is also the Council's responsibility, as has been said repeatedly, to make a distinction between terrorists and the opposition.

We are at a turning point in the war in Syria. We can try to protect the population of Aleppo and restore the cessation of hostilities across the country, or we can let the conflict descend into a spiral of violence with the attendant unpredictable consequences. Spain firmly supports the first option. As I noted at the outset, we will continue to work with Egypt and with New Zealand, in a few minutes' time in the Consultations Room, and with our other partners in the Security Council to try to achieve that outcome.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like at the outset to thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Ms. Hoff, the representative of the World Health Organization, for their briefings.

The humanitarian situation in some areas of Syria, including in Aleppo, is very serious, leading to massive civilian casualties and including attacks on civilian and health-care facilities. China condemns any attack against civilians or humanitarian infrastructure. We truly empathize with the Syrian people's suffering. We urge all parties in Syria to assist with the relief efforts of the international community by providing full humanitarian access so as to ensure the timely and safe delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The international community should also work jointly to take expeditious action to ease tensions so as to create conditions conducive to the implementation of humanitarian assistance and the promotion of a political settlement of the issue.

In working to mitigate the humanitarian situation, we should not overlook the need to combat terrorism. Terrorists and terrorist organizations inside Syria are launching repeated attacks, gravely hampering humanitarian efforts. The international community must strengthen its coordination, follow uniform standards and resolutely combat all Council-listed terrorist organizations.

A political settlement is the only viable way to resolve the Syrian issue, and the international community should stay the course in that respect. Any action taken by the Council on the issue of Syria should truly improve the situation there and be genuinely beneficial to the promotion of the political process, to advancing humanitarian relief efforts and to efforts to combat terrorism. China will continue to support the mediation efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Hoff for their briefings this morning.

At the outset, let me stress once again what has already been agreed on repeatedly by the international community: that there can be no military solution to the Syrian crisis. A comprehensive settlement is required in order to bring about a united, sovereign Syria that responds to the Syrian people's desire for a future of security and prosperity that is free of terrorism, and it must be based on Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2254 (2015), and the Geneva communiqué. This will require efforts by the Syrian Government and the opposition to agree on an interim phase.

Egypt, in cooperation with our Security Council partners Spain and New Zealand, is continuing to seek to alleviate the humanitarian situation in Syria, particularly in Aleppo, in view of what has befallen that city. We believe that the Security Council will not be able to reach a definitive solution so long as a political settlement hinges on agreement between the Syrian parties. We have therefore provided the Security

Council, through our draft resolution, with a clear path, which will be a pivotal step towards helping to reach this objective. We hope that the Security Council will be soon able to support this view.

There is a need for a cessation of hostilities in Aleppo for at least 10 days in order to create a humanitarian space, as well as for an immediate call for a cessation of hostilities in Syria in general, in order to reach a definitive ceasefire in accordance with resolution 2268 (2016), with implementation monitoring. This vision also includes combating terrorism; an end to cooperation by any party in Syria with terrorist groups, which now control large swathes of territory in the country; and the need to work to initiate serious negotiations between the Syrian parties on the interim period, in accordance with the Geneva communiqué and resolution 2254 (2015).

Let me reiterate our hope that the Security Council will be able to adopt this view as soon as possible. I would also call once again on all parties within and outside Syria to overcome their political differences in order to end this humanitarian tragedy, whose consequences are being borne by the Syrian people alone.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Senegal.

The Senegalese delegation, like those that spoke before it, expresses its profound thanks to Mr. Stephen O'Brien and Ms. Elizabeth Hoff for their briefings.

Unfortunately, the Security Council is once again responding to the heartfelt appeals by Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Hoff to our humanity with a public showing of its lack of unity, its divisiveness, its lack of political will and, in short, its powerlessness to take concrete action on any one dimension of the tragedy in Syria, including the political, humanitarian and security dimensions. As we saw last Thursday (see S/PV.7815), the Council cannot even agree on the non-proliferation dimension. At the same time, the downward spiral into the depths of suffering and horror in that country continues. At the same time, the risk of that large and beautiful country's fragmentation is increasing. Terrorists from everywhere continue to take root and exert their influence. Syria's rich cultural heritage is in the process of being destroyed and trafficked. In order to prevent all of that, the Senegalese delegation calls on the Council to leap to action and help the Syrian people undergoing a national crisis.

We welcome the courageous initiative undertaken by the penholders — Malaysia, Spain and New Zealand — in calling for the adoption of a new draft resolution to end the violence in Syria, in particular in Aleppo. We must support that initiative, because we owe it to the suffering population of Syria and the valiant humanitarian workers from all over whose calling it is to tirelessly offer relief to civilians in Syria. In that spirit, I call on the members of the Council, during our meeting in the closed consultations following this meeting, to find reason for a glimmer of hope. We must do that, because we are all in agreement that there can be no military solution to the conflict. Let us therefore work towards finding a political solution. And in doing so, we will send a message of hope to the talks in Lausanne and Geneva, and renew our support for the International Syria Support Group, in particular to the co-Chairs, so as to give a new breath of life to the cessation of hostilities regime.

I now resume my functions as President.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I simply want to state for the record that we are witnessing, within the Security Council, the normalization of a culture of unacceptable behaviour. When the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic took the floor, other Permanent Representatives purposefully stood up and left the Chamber. We believe that such conduct points to their lack of courage to listen to a statement made by a professional colleague. That is unacceptable.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in French*): I join my colleague, the representative of the Russian Federation, in what he has just stated in such a dignified matter with regard to behaviour by certain Council members towards me. Having said that, since the three musketeers, the advocates of a system aimed at sowing moral confusion, have left the Chamber and are thereby no longer in a position to undermine and poison our important discussion on my country, Syria, I can now deliver my statement in peace.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

At the outset, I welcome Ms. Hoff, who joins us from Damascus, the world's oldest capital. I bid

welcome to the United Nations personnel in my country. They are on-the-ground witnesses who can effectively inform the Security Council with far more accurate information than the United Nations bureaucrats in New York can muster.

Allow me first to share a piece of information with my colleagues with regard to a fresh massacre committed by war planes of the so-called international coalition led by the United States against Syrian civilians. More than 10 civilians lost their lives in a raid conducted by those United States aeroplanes against the village of Al-Salhiya in rural northern Al-Raqqa. Other war planes of the same coalition targeted a cotton mill in the same village, resulting in the martyrdom of three workers and an entire family, composed of six civilians, that had been displaced from another area. Those are today's developments, which have resulted from the actions of United States war planes.

Naturally, I will not respond to the statements made by certain colleagues. I would like, however, to respond to the statement delivered by the representative of the United States to the effect that she was allegedly told by an eye witness among the terrorists sponsored by the United States in eastern Aleppo that Syrian and Russian war planes conducted 180 air raids on Saturday alone. Being a seasoned and expert diplomat, she naively believed the eye witness, who is putatively a terrorist from Jabhat Al-Nusra, which her own Government has qualified as a terrorist group in the Council. What kind of hypocrisy is that? What sort of lies are we hearing in these unnecessary meetings on the humanitarian situation in my country?

Then she mendaciously Al-Nusra Front falsely claimed that leaflets were dropped by the Syrian air force, urging civilians in eastern Aleppo to leave or they would be killed. That is what was stated by the representative of the United States. Such talk simply amounts to lies upon lies and, frankly, they are shameful. The Syrian air force did drop leaflets in eastern Aleppo, calling on civilians to distance themselves from armed terrorist groups in the eatern part of the city and to leave eastern Aleppo. The Syrian Government opened six humanitarian corridors for civilians and two for the fighters who wish to leave eastern Aleppo. However, the terrorists, of course, did not leave and did not allow the civilians to leave because they use them as human shields.

At any rate, if some Governments are concerned about the terrorists in eastern Aleppo, why do they not issue them with passports or visas and take them in? If the representative of the United States believes that the arrival of 8,000 armed terrorists from eastern Aleppo in the United States will help the Syrian people, then take them, especially given the fact that most of them are not Syrian. In a special report from the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Council stated that there are approximately 80,000 foreign terrorists in Syria, who came to my country from around 100 States Members of the United Nations. That was stated by the Council. That seems to have fallen on deaf ears, in the case of the Ambassadors of the United States, the United Kingdom and France.

Not once did Mr. O'Brien refer to terrorism in his briefing. Not once was the word terrorism used, as if there were no terrorism whatsoever in my country, Syria, and it is all a mere Tom and Jerry cartoon in the minds of some. I respect the comments made by my colleague, the Ambassador of Uruguay. He quite rightly wondered about which god and what values compel a terrorist to kill civilians.

It is a valid question. However, the reply can be found in the hundreds of letters that we have sent to the Council over a five-year period, stating who is doing what on Syrian territories. There are hundreds of letters in which we have explained the presence of terrorists on the ground. Many resolutions have been adopted, in particular resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign armed mercenaries. Yet some in the Council still do not know which Godand which religion, and who is the takfiri who brought us Saudi and Qatari Wahhabi's Fatwas to shed blood in my country, as if it is a piece of information not known to some, and as if what the takfiris are doing is occurring in Somalia and not in Syria.

To my dear friend the Ambassador of Uruguay, I say — the terrorists are the takfiris. The takfiri terrorists are influenced by the Saudi Wahhabi way of thinking. In other words, a takfiri is anyone who considers you infidel and deserve being killed because you do not share his extremist views. That is the meaning of takfiri. The actions of Da'esh and Al-Nusra are based on the same Wahabi doctrine that prevails in Saudi Arabia. They have exported that terrorism to us. They have brought terrorists to us from all over the world — Australians, Canadians, French, Belgians, Spaniards, Chinese, Russians. The entire garbage pail of the world's terrorism has been heaped on us. Yet some

are still wondering what is occurring in Syria? who is killing whom? Why does humanitarian assistance not reach eastern Aleppo? Who is hampering humanitarian assistance to eastern Aleppo? As if such questions need a key to be answered after five years of criminal acts being perpetrated against my country.

The kind of terrorism we suffer is the same that prevails everywhere — in Iraq, Libya, Egypt, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, the Niger, Chad and Nigeria. It is the same terrorism; its roots are the same. Why do we all, without exception, support the fight being waged by the Iraqi Government and the popular mobilization forces against Da'esh terrorism in Mosul? We do so because it is a valid right. The Iraqi Government is fighting terrorism. We are combating the very same terrorism in Syria. Terrorism in Aleppo is the same kind of terrorism carried out in Mosul, so why then are we being condemned while the very same people who criticize us support those who are fighting the same terrorism in Mosul? Da'esh is there and the same Da'esh is here, in my country. Why does that double standard exist?

Let us not forget that United States air raid against the Syrian Arab Army sites in Deir ez-Zor, allowing that city to be besieged by ISIL. There are 300,000 people in Deir Ez-Zor receiving food and medical assistance, air-dropped by helicopters, simply because the United States air force struck the Syrian Arab army sites in Deir ez-Zor. Does the representative of the United States recall the theatrics at the meeting that immediately followed that attack, and the claims that a mistake had been made? Two days later, every civilian bridge on the Euphrates was also struck. Is this fighting Da'esh? Is it the goal of the United States air force to target Syrian infrastructure? There were 200 victims when Manbij was struck by the French air force, and the same number after it was struck by the United Kingdom air force. What is all this absurdity.

The statements made by the representatives of some States and the briefing given by the Under-Secretary-General for humanitarian affairs met our expectations for the thirty-third time with their same negative, erroneous approach of distorting facts and making light of the suffering of the Syrian people. It reveals the politicization of the humanitarian situation in order to demonize the Syrian Government with a view to creating a terrorist entity — a terrorist statelet — in my country, Syria. That is the plan — to create a terrorist statelet in Syria. It is a fact — a terrorist entity that obtains support from the Western sponsors of terrorism. It is further proof that those States and actors have no will or desire to end the suffering of our people and continue to deny the root causes of the crisis in Syria.

In that regard, I repeat once again that we reject the fact that the crisis in my country, Syria, is being addressed without serious consideration for its root causes. Those causes are the emergence and spread of armed terrorist groups, the recruitment of tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters supported by well-known States, and their deployment in neighbourhoods, villages, towns and cities where they use civilians as human shields. Let me repeat again that certain States that today use the suffering of the Syrian people as a cheap tool to implement their political agenda, by claiming to be concerned for their security and well-being, are the main reason for this suffering, either through their direct support to armed terrorist groups or their imposition of unilateral coercive measures, which affect Syrian citizens directly. Let me repeat again that no one in the world is more eager than us, the Government and the people of Syria, to preserve the lives of Syrian citizens, whether in Aleppo, Dara'a, Damascus, Raqqa or any other place where civilians suffer because of the practices of armed terrorist groups that use them as humans shields, besiege them in their towns and villages, prevent them from leaving those areas and obstruct their access to humanitarian assistance or sell them such assistance at prices they cannot afford.

Let me repeat yet again that, in the light of this bitter fact, any Government, including the Syrian Government, has the moral and legal obligation to save their citizens from becoming hostages to terrorists. Yesterday, 20 November, groups that certain parties and States like to call non-State armed opposition groups perpetrated a new, horrific and premeditated massacre when their terrorists stationed in the Bustan Al-Qasr neighbourhood of eastern Aleppo launched a number of missiles against the Al-Furqan and Saria Hassoun schools in the Al-Furqan community of western Aleppo, killing 10 children between the ages of 7 and 12 and wounding 59 others, including a female teacher whose leg had to be amputated. These are pictures of the school that was bombed in Aleppo by the so-called moderate armed groups — the genetically modified armed groups. Obviously, some people do not care about such photographs and will not speak about them.

Incidentally, as I mentioned, one of the schools that was attacked is named Saria Hassoun. Five years ago, I spoke to the Council (see S/PV.6627) and stated that armed terrorist groups had killed the son of the Mufti in Syria, the Public Mufti of the Syrian Arab Republic, whose name is Saria Hassoun. That school was named after the martyr Saria Hassoun, son of Syria's Mufti, who was killed by terrorists five years ago. Today, they are attacking the school named after him.

In addition to striking those two schools, the terrorists from Jabhat Al-Nusra, the Nur al-Din al-Zenki Movement, which is supported by Turkish intelligence services, and other terrorist groups classified as moderate armed groups by Washington, Paris and London, who pay their mercenaries and provide them with funding and weapons, part of which came from Ukraine, Bulgaria and Croatia, also opened fire on the law school and the Mogambo and Al-Midan neighbourhoods, killing two individuals and wounding 33 others. Furthermore, missiles launched by terrorist groups against Al-Ma'damia and Saif Al-Doula neighbourhoods in western Aleppo killed two people and wounded seven citizens.

Those attacks by terrorist armed groups coincided with another truce, the third of its kind since 9 September, which was declared by the Syrian Government and its allies in the city of Aleppo in order to save the lives of innocent citizens and end their suffering. I repeat that this is the third truce since 9 September, which goes completely counter to what the American Ambassador said to the effect that an eye witness told her that the Russian and Syrian air forces bombed eastern Aleppo 180 times on Saturday. Imagine such ridiculous talk coming from the representative of a super-Power and a permanent member of the Security Council. The truce declared by the Syrian Government and its allies provides for safe passage to be given to any armed persons seeking to leave the area, normalize their situation or take their personal weapons to another place of their choice; for the evacuation and medical care for the wounded, in order to restore normal life to the eastern part of Aleppo — and I am talking about the eastern side of Aleppo, not the east side of Manhattan, California, Glasgow or Marseille; the eastern part of Aleppo, a Syrian city — and for the resumption of the State institutions' tasks to to provide services and meet the needs of citizens who wish to remain in eastern Aleppo.

Regrettably, well-known States and parties have hampered all such initiatives by instructing the armed terrorist groups to reject any initiative, target civilians inside their schools and homes in western Aleppo, entrench themselves in civilian neighbourhoods in eastern Aleppo, use civilians as human shields and kill any civilian trying to reach the safe exit points, as was the case on 17 November when 17 civilians were executed for protesting the practices of terrorist groups in eastern Aleppo. That fact demonstrates that these armed terrorist groups are a tool for a heinous blackmail by certain States to achieve a tawdry political agenda at the expense of the suffering of the Syrian people and their blood.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic rejects the selective approach of certain States and United Nations bodies to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. It stresses that the main reason for the non-delivery of humanitarian assistance in many regions are the following. First, terrorist groups are besieging entire areas and rejecting the delivery of any assistance. Secondly, armed terrorist groups are targeting and stealing from humanitarian convoys. Thirdly, insecurity in the regions where armed terrorist groups are active, including highway robberies, targeting of civilian aircraft and aircraft carrying assistance, attacking humanitarian and medical workers and selling humanitarian assistance material. Fourthly, politicizing the humanitarian question in Syria and a double standard maintained by certain States and organizations that focus on the humanitarian situation in some areas exclusively for political aims, while fully ignoring other regions. Fifthly, a lack of cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government, and the use of agreements with non-governmental organizations that are not accredited by Syria, or organizations working from Gaziantep in Turkey without coordination with the Syrian Government. That is something we will not tolerate. Sixthly, there is a lack of funding for humanitarian response plans as a result of the failure by some States to fulfil their pledges. The funding for the response plan for 2016 did not exceed 33 per cent. Lastly, there is the delay in the implementation of projects and programmes under the response plan.

In conclusion, the Syrian people have grown sick and tired of mendacious statements and hypocritical initiatives, as well as the misleading reports that have flooded the work of the Security Council and United

Nations bodies almost on a daily basis over the past five years, but have brought about no humanitarian benefit to the Syrian people. Indeed, their suffering has increased in an unprecedented manner because some within, and outside, the Council have been involved in fuelling and perpetuating the crisis. As for the assistance that has arrived — and Ms. Hoff did say that millions of Syrians benefitted from that assistance — that was done in coordination with the Syrian Government — 70 to 75 per cent of the assistance was provided by the Syrian Government itself — not the United Nations, despite the siege imposed on us by the States sponsoring terrorism and the economic sanctions that have been levelled against us for years.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.